THE CHRISTIAN'S MAGAZINE, OR TREASURE.

CONTAINING, A

CHOICE COLLECTION

OF MANY

REMARKABLE PASSAGES

UPON SEVERAL

Important Religious Subjects,

Taken out of the

WRITINGS of Some of the Moſt EMINENT

MODERN DIVINES:

Tending to Our CONFIRMATION

Both in the

BELIEF *and* PRACTICE

OF THE

TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

AGAINST

Atheiſts, Deiſts, Socinians, Papiſts,

And other CORRUPT and LOOSE

CHRISTIANS.

BY

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Oldeſt Members of the Royal COLLEGE *of* PHYSICIANS.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

PREFACE.

IF any ſtrict Inquiry be made into the Cauſes of the general Decay of Piety among Chriſtians, it will be found, that the Want of a due Information of the Truth and Excellency of that Religion they profeſs, is none of the leaſt, but rather the moſt common and univerſal. Many, if not the greateſt Part of thoſe who are born in a Chriſtian Country, and of Chriſtian Parents, are nevertheleſs brought up and live in a groſs and ſhameful Ignorance both of the Doctrines and Precepts of Chriſtianity; and among thoſe who have had the Advantage of a better and more religious Education, there are very few who have been ſo well inſtructed as to work in them a full Perſuaſion and intire Conviction of what they have been taught, their Belief being much more grounded upon

the Authority of their Teachers, than upon any rational Evidence of the Things they believe. 'Tis no Wonder then, if a Faith, built upon ſuch a ſandy Foundation, may be eaſily ſhaken and overthrown, and is unable to reſiſt long the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil, we are continually expoſed to. How can it be expected that ſuch a weak Faith ſhould remove Mountains, and overcome the greateſt Difficulties we meet with in our Chriſtian Race, and Warfare? Nothing but a ſtrong and firm Belief, which is the Reſult of our own humble, ſerious and diligent Inquiry after Truth, is that Faith built upon a Rock, which overcomes the World, and can hardly be ſhaken by the moſt violent Temptations: For, let the World or the Devil promiſe never ſo fair, or threaten ſo hard, God in his Word offers to our Conſideration infinitely greater Promiſes, and more dreadful Threatnings, which, when firmly believed and attended to, muſt needs prevail, and make us ſtedfaſt and unmoveable.

The

The Compiler of this Work having been by God's good and gracious Providence brought under such Circumstances of Life, as gave him an Opportunity to discover the Weakness of the Grounds his Faith, as well as that of many others, was built upon; and having by his Grace put into his Mind the Resolution to endeavour to strengthen it, and to make himself more capable, not only of answering the Objections and Cavils of such prophane and Atheistical Men, as he had sometimes met with, but also of silencing and subduing those irregular Passions he found himself most liable to; to that End he betook himself to the reading of many excellent Books written of late by several eminent Divines, which he thought most proper for his Purpose; and that he might improve himself the more by that Reading, what Reasons and Arguments he found to make the greatest Impression upon his Mind, he copied out, at first confusedly and promiscuously, and afterwards digested into such a Method and Order, as is to be seen in this Book; the Whole being designed merely

for his own Inſtruction, and never intended for the Preſs, till, upon ſecond Thoughts, having conſidered, that if made publick, it might alſo prove beneficial to ſome others, he was prevailed upon to let it be printed.

The Author is not ignorant that it is not for want of excellent Books of this Nature that we are not generally better Chriſtians than we are; but at the ſame time he is apt to think, there are not many to be found, which, within the like Compaſs, contain ſo many ſtrong and powerful Arguments to inforce upon us both the Belief and Practice of the Chriſtian Religion; and beſides in one Reſpect this may have ſome Advantage above others; for, conſiſting only of ſeveral ſhort ſeparate Articles, which have little or no Connexion one with another, it will not ſo ſoon tire Peoples Patience and Attention, as a long coherent Diſcourſe is apt to do. Men are generally ſo taken up with the Pleaſures and other Vanities of this World, that they grow ſoon weary of any thing which diverts them from them; but here they may, without any great Loſs of Time, (as

they may take it to be) read one of the Chapters, or only ſome Part of it, and ſo leave off when they pleaſe; and by that Means ſome may perhaps by Degrees be brought to love what they could not endure at firſt, and be convinced that there is nothing deſerves ſo much their moſt ſerious Conſideration, as moſt of the Contents of this Book; viz. *as to be fully ſatisfied in their Minds, that there is a God, that is, an Eternal, Almighty Being, infinitely wiſe, good and juſt, and poſſeſs'd of all other poſſible Perfections: That this Being, beſides his written Law in our Hearts, which was much defaced by the Fall of our firſt Parents, hath been pleaſed farther to reveal his Will; Firſt, After a ſomewhat obſcure and imperfect Manner, in the Books of the Old, and then more plainly and fully in the Writings of the New Teſtament: That our greateſt Concern is to know and to do that Will, ſince we can never be perfectly happy, but by conforming ours to it, and can be but miſerable, if we act a contrary Way. 'Tis what we could eaſily be made ſenſible of, if we had but a right*

Notion

Notion of his and of our own Being; for then it will evidently appear to us, that he is the only true Cauſe of all the Pleaſure we enjoy, and of all the Pain we endure, even in this Life; and that all created and material Beings are only occaſional ones, uncapable of working in us any pleaſant or grievous Senſation, but by virtue of thoſe Laws of Union God in his infinite Wiſdom has thought fit to eſtabliſh between the Soul and the Body. When we duly conſider the different Nature, Powers and Capacities of theſe two Subſtances, we cannot conceive how they may act upon one another, how a material and extended Subſtance can act upon that which is immaterial and unextended: That Conſideration alone, well weighed and improved, may be of very great uſe to moderate our Love for the Things of this World, and to raiſe our Thoughts and Affections from thoſe ſenſible Objects we are generally ſo fond of, to him, who being not only the Chief, but the only true Good, ought conſequently to be the Object of our moſt ardent Love, and moſt earneſt Deſires.

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THE *Christian's* MAGAZINE, *&c.*

CHAP. I.

Of the Unreasonableness and Danger of Atheism and Infidelity.

IF a wise and considerate Man were left to himself, and his own Choice, to wish the greatest Good to himself he could devise; after he had searched Heaven and Earth, the Sum of all his Wishes would be this, that there were just such a Being as God is: Nor would he chuse any other Benefactor, or Friend, or Protector for himself, or Governor for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, and Justice, which is the true Notion of a God.

EXCEPT the avoiding of Persecution for Religion, there is no Advantage that the Principles of Atheism, if they could be quietly settled in a Man's Mind, can give him. The Advantage indeed that Men make of them, is to give themselves the Liberty to do what they please; to be more sensual and unjust than other Men; that is, they have the Privilege to surfeit themselves, and to be sick oftner than other Men, and to make Mankind their Enemy by their unjust and dis-

honeſt Actions, and conſequently to live more uneaſily in the World than other Men.

He who chuſeth that Faith and Practice, againſt which eternal Miſery in another State is denounced, ought to have not only more Grounds of Probability, but Certainty and Evidence of Conviction of his Side; becauſe the Conſequences are of that vaſt Importance, that the preſent Inconveniences which we are like to ſuſtain by acting a contrary way, can bear no Proportion to the Hazard or Likelihood of Miſery that attends our acting this way.

A ſlender Suſpicion of the Exiſtence of a Being, the Denial whereof is of the ſaddeſt Conſequence, muſt needs diſturb the Atheiſt's Thoughts, and fill him with Fears, and qualify and allay all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments, and render him miſerable even in this Life. On the other Side, he that believeth and owns a God, if there ſhould be none, is in no Danger of any bad Conſequent; for all the Inconvenience of this Belief will be, that he may be hereby occaſion'd to tie himſelf up to ſome needleſs Reſtraints during this ſhort Time of his Life, wherein, notwithſtanding, there is as to the preſent much Peace, Quiet and Safety; and as to the future his Error ſhall die with him, there being none to call him to an Account for his Miſtake. It may be added, that he not only ſuffers no Damage, but reaps a conſiderable Benefit from this Miſtake; for during this Life he enjoys a pleaſant Dream or Fancy of a future bleſſed Eſtate, with the Thoughts and Expectations whereof he ſolaces himſelf, and agreeably entertains his Time, and is in no Danger of being ever awakened out of it, and convinced of his Error and Folly, Death making a full End of him.

If all the People, or any conſiderable Number of them, were of the Atheiſt's Perſuaſion, they would ſoon overturn Government, and bring all Things to an Equality; and then farewel all the Pleaſures, Enjoyments and Conveniencies of living; when every Man muſt labour and toil to maintain his own Life, and at the ſame time be in continual Fear of having it taken away by others; which would make them repent that they did not keep their Opinions to themſelves.

The Doctrines of Irreligion have none of thoſe Grounds of Credibility, nor are or can be defended by any of thoſe Ways or Methods by which Religion is eſtabliſh'd. They conſiſt wholly in the Denial and Contradiction of other Propoſitions, and therefore do not admit of any poſitive direct Proof, but muſt be proved by a Confutation of the Aſſertion denied.

When we are under a Neceſſity of judging one way, (as we are in all ſuch Matters where it concerns our Happineſs to act or not to act) 'tis contrary to Reaſon not to be determined by that Degree of Evidence, whatever it be, which appears on one Side, when we have nothing on the other Side to balance it; and therefore it muſt be very fooliſh and abſurd to take the Party of Irreligion, for no other Reaſon but this, that the Proofs of Religion have not all that Strength and Evidence of Conviction which ſome other Truths ſeem to have.

A modeſt Inquirer ſees enough in the Works of Creation and Providence, to ſatisfy him, that the World was made and is governed by a wiſe Being; but thoſe who think themſelves wiſe enough to make and govern a World a great deal better than this World is made and governed, or are upon other accounts averſe to the Belief of a God, and have a mind to quarrel with him,

take no notice of what is wiſe and good, and deny God to be infinitely wiſe, and infinitely good, tho' they cannot open their Eyes without ſeeing a thouſand ſuch Inſtances of Wiſdom and Goodneſs; but employ the little Wit they have to find fault, and account every thing they cannot underſtand, a Fault.

Were it imaginable, that God ſhould ſo far court the Infidelity of Men, as to allow them to make their own Demands, to ſet down what Ways of Proof would perſuade them; I doubt not, there are many have Obſtinacy enough to defeat their own Methods, as they do now God's. 'Tis ſure there is no ordinary Way of Conviction left for them to ask, God having already afforded that.

Set aſide the Relation between Cauſes and Effects, and all the Arguments from Cauſes to Effects, and from Effects to Cauſes; and there is an End of all Knowledge: And ſet aſide all thoſe firſt Principles and Maxims of Reaſon, which all Men aſſent to at the firſt Propoſal; the Truth of which they ſee and feel, and there is an End of all Reaſon; for there can be no Reaſoning without the Acknowledgment of ſome Principles, which the Mind hath a clear, diſtinct and vigorous Perception of; and if Men will diſtruſt their own Minds in ſuch Things as they have an eaſy, natural Perception of, and prefer ſome arbitrary Notions, which ſeem abſurd Contradictions, and impoſſible to the reſt of Mankind, and which they can have no Idea of, beyond the Sound of Words; they may be Atheiſts, if they pleaſe, at the Expence of their Reaſon and Underſtanding, that is, they may be Atheiſts, if they will not judge and reaſon like Men. But if we are as certain of the Being of a God, as we are that nothing can be without a Cauſe, we have

all

all the Certainty that human Nature is capable of.

It is a deplorable Thing to be reduced to a Condition destitute of all Comfort. Men are often so distressed, that were it not for the Notion and Consideration of a God, they would not know what to do with themselves, nor how to entertain their Minds with any thing comfortable amidst their Sufferings and Distresses. In great Extremity, the Atheist himself hath naturally Recourse to God, which is a sure Indication, that they have not been able wholly to extinguish in their Minds its Belief, and that at the Bottom of their Hearts they have a firm Persuasion of his Goodness, when after all their insolent Defiance of him, they have the Confidence to apply themselves to him for Mercy and Help in Time of Need.

It is a Piece of Art to be an Atheist, which they are a great while a-learning, which very few Men, tho' well disposed to it, can ever learn. But to believe a God, and to fear and reverence his invisible Power and Nature, is not Art, but Nature, and therefore common to all Mankind, and the first Thing they learn to believe. Upon Examination it will appear, that all irreligious Opinions are first taken up in Company; and that no Man receiveth the first Impressions of Atheism alone from his own calm and sedate Reflections.

No Man ever denied a God, who thought his Way and Course of Life acceptable to such a Being: No Man ever questioned a future State, who could possibly persuade himself, that if there was one, Happiness would be his Portion in it. There was never a Man that said there was no God, but he wished it first.

'Tis God only that hath Power of Annihilation, and we vile Worms ſeek here to ſteal that incommunicable Right, and retort it upon himſelf, and by an anticreative Power would unmake him who hath made us.

The Atheiſt would fain perſuade us, that it is ſo far from being true, that God is our Creator, that he is merely the Creature of our own Fear and Imagination.

We ſhould think him an extraordinary Benefactor, who did the thouſandth Part for us of what God does, and ſhould not challenge his Goodneſs, tho' he did ſome Things which we did not like, or did not underſtand; but Atheiſm is founded in Ingratitude, and unleſs God humour them, as well as do them good, he is no God for them.

What is there in Religion, if it were untrue, that can ſeem ridiculous? What in the awful Majeſty of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, that can provoke the Laughter and Mockery of any but Fools and Madmen? It is not obvious to conceive, why it ſhould be thought a greater Argument of a Man's Parts to revile his God than his Prince, or why the Wit ſhould atone for the Crime more in the one Caſe than in the other.

Unless the utter Impoſſibility of an after Life were demonſtrable, the bare Poſſibility of its Exiſtence remaining, a wiſe Man would not hazard his eternal Salvation on the Disbelief, or ſo much as unproviding Diffidency thereof.

The Doubters of another Life, are of all Men the moſt credulous, (notwithſtanding their pretended Caution) in believing there is no other World, or at leaſt ſuſpecting it upon ſlight Grounds, wild Diſtruſts, and bare Perhaps's, without any reaſonable Proofs or Aſſurance 'tis not; nay, againſt the Dictates of Reaſon, of

Scripture,

Scripture, and of Conſcience; againſt the univerſal Conſent and Authority of all Ages and Nations, civil and barbarous, learned and unlearned, only becauſe they wiſh, and would have no after Life, their preſent wicked one having rendred it their ſole Security there ſhould be none; and conſequently their Dread and Terror to expect one.

Is there any greater Piece of Folly than to refuſe to believe any Thing but what we ſee, when the Matter in Queſtion is about Objects who ſhould not be, if they were not inviſible? Do you ſee what is paſt, what is to come, your Soul?

As we are forward to believe what we have a mind to, ſo are we very backward and ſlow in yielding our Aſſent to any thing that croſſeth our Inclinations; Men that allow themſelves in Ungodlineſs, and worldly Luſts, will not eaſily believe thoſe Doctrines which charge Men ſo ſtrictly with all manner of Holineſs and Purity.

As the Clearneſs of the bodily Eye does diſpoſe it for a quicker Sight of material Objects, ſo does the Purity of our Minds, that is, Freedom from Luſt and Paſſion, diſpoſe us for the cleareſt and moſt perfect Acts of Reaſon and Underſtanding.

The Riches and the Pleaſures of this Life prepoſſeſs the Heart; the Heart being prepoſſeſt, draws in the Underſtanding; that is the firſt Cauſe of Unbelief.

Wise Men ought to reaſon ſo with themſelves: It is of the greateſt Concern in the World, not to be miſtaken in the Queſtion, whether there is a God and a Life to come? Therefore laying aſide all other Conſideration, I will endeavour to know the Truth, and yield to it.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the Exiſtence of God.

THINGS of a moral Nature are capable of Proof but by moral Arguments, and Matters of Fact but by credible Teſtimony; ſo that when any Thing in any of theſe Kinds is proved by as good Arguments as a Thing of that Kind is capable of, and we have as great Aſſurance that it is, as we could poſſibly have ſuppoſing it were, we ought not in Reaſon to make any Doubt of the Exiſtence of that Thing. Now ſuppoſe there were ſuch a Being as an infinite Spirit, cloathed with all poſſible Perfection, what conceivable Ways are there, whereby we ſhould come to be aſſured that there is ſuch a Being, but either by an eternal Impreſſion of the Notion of a God upon our Minds, or elſe by ſuch external and viſible Effects as our Reaſon tells us muſt be attributed to ſome Cauſe; and which we cannot without great Violence to our Underſtandings attribute to any other Cauſe, but ſuch a Being as we conceive God to be? that is, one that is infinitely good, and wiſe, and powerful. Now we have this double Aſſurance that there is a God, and greater or other than this, the Thing is not capable of; what could the Atheiſt deſire God to do for his Conviction more than he hath already done? Could he deſire him to work a greater Miracle than to make a World?

We find it utterly unconceivable and impoſſible that any Thing ſhould make itſelf, that a Being which once did not exiſt, ſhould begin to be of itſelf, without the Aſſiſtance of ſome other Being which exiſted before it; from whence we are irreſiſtibly convinced, that ſomething muſt be eternal, ſince otherwiſe nothing could ever have been; for if any Time can be ſuppoſed in which nothing did exiſt, nothing would ever have exiſted, unleſs that which once was not, could raiſe itſelf into Being; but this is impoſſible; and 'tis certain that ſomething now really is, therefore ſomething muſt be eternal.

Whatsoever is ſaid to be eternal, which is not God, is at the ſame Time ſaid to want thoſe Perfections which we aſcribe to God, and which are certainly the chief, if not the only one imaginable by us; and as 'tis manifeſt, that where theſe are wanting, there cannot be all poſſible Perfection, ſo 'tis abſurd to ſuppoſe, that what is deſtitute of Knowledge and Will, ſhould neceſſarily cauſe and be the Author of all temporary Productions, rather than ſuch a Being as is endued with theſe Characters in the higheſt and moſt perfect Degree.

We are certain that we are, and we know not our Original, or by what Power we came at firſt to be; we perceive a great many Things without us, the Beginning of which we know not, nor can we tell by what Means they came to exiſt; is it therefore moſt likely and probable, that there ſhould be no ſuch Being as that which we ſuppoſe to be the Cauſe of all Things, than that there really is ſome ſuch perfect Being, who is the Author of all theſe Effects which we perceive? Can we, from the Oeconomy of the World, and the Courſe of Nature, infer that there is no governing and directing Power in the Univerſe? Can

Can we from the Frame and Diſpoſition of our own Minds prove that we are under no Law or Obligation of acting, or that Religion is deſtructive of our Happineſs?

A Being infinite, and of all poſſible Perfections, muſt needs have that of exiſting neceſſarily, and by himſelf; a Being exiſting neceſſarily, hath likewiſe all poſſible Perfections that is reciprocal; for if a Being infinite did not exiſt neceſſarily, it would not be true that he had all poſſible Perfections; he ſhould want the chief, which is that of being eſſentially by himſelf, and of ſtanding in need of no other Being to exiſt; if a Being exiſting neceſſarily had not all poſſible Perfections, then he muſt be limited; and if he be limited, ſome firſt Cauſe muſt limit it; and if he hath any Cauſe, he is not by himſelf, which is againſt the Suppoſition.

'Tis agreed on all Hands, that the Fear of a Deity poſſeſſeth univerſally the Minds of Men; then the Queſtion is to know, whether it be more likely, that the Exiſtence of God is the Cauſe of this Fear, or whether it be more probable, that this Fear is the Reaſon which makes Men fancy that there is a God? If there be a God, who hath imprinted his Image in the Mind of Man; all Men have a great Reaſon to fear that God: But if there be no God, 'tis not eaſy to conceive how Fear can make Men ſo univerſally believe, and with ſo much Confidence, that there is one; for from whence will this Fear proceed?

From the forging of ſo many Gods, one may rather conclude that there is a true one, than that there is none. What is counterfeit hath a Reference to ſomething real.

If we conſult our Reaſon, we cannot but believe that God is; if we conſult our Intereſt, we cannot

cannot but wiſh with all our Hearts, that there be ſuch a Being.

If we believe that there is a God who takes Care of us, and we endeavour to pleaſe him, there is an abundant Spring of Comfort; for then we are ſure, that either God will prevent by his Providence thoſe Evils we are afraid of if he thinks it uſeful for us; or that he will bear us up under thoſe Calamities, when they will befal us, and will increaſe our Strength as our Burden grows the heavier; that he will make them ſerve to communicate to us more Graces and Benefits, turning them to our temporal or eternal Advantage. All that falls, if there be no God.

God's Exiſtence cannot be proved, but by his Works, and his Effects, ſince the firſt of all Cauſes cannot be demonſtrated by his Cauſe.

When we ſay that God is the firſt Cauſe, we mean, that there was nothing before him, and that he was before all Things, and that all Things are by him.

If I do not naturally know there is a God, how can I naturally know that there is any Law obliging to what is good and juſt, and forbidding what is evil and unjuſt?

Suppoſing that the Exiſtence of a Deity were not demonſtrably or infallibly proved, (as it moſt certainly is) yet no Man can be ſure of the contrary that there is none; for no Man can be ſure of a pure Negative, namely, that ſuch a Thing is not, unleſs he will either pretend to have a certain Knowledge of all Things that are or may be, than which nothing can be more monſtrouſly and ridiculouſly arrogant, or elſe, unleſs he be ſure that the Being of what he denieth does imply a Contradiction; for which there is not the leaſt Colour in this Caſe, the true Notion of God conſiſting in this, that he is a Being of all poſſible

Perfection.

Perfection. Now, if he be not ſure that there is no Deity, he cannot be without ſome Suſpicion and Fear that there may be one.

When all Men agree in Matters of pure Reflection and Reaſon, (as they do in the Acknowledgment of a God) we have all the Aſſurance that we can have, that they are in the Right; becauſe in this Caſe we are certain, not only that the Appearance is uniform, but that the Faculty is employed about its proper Object; and if the Underſtanding ſhould be deceived in ſuch Things as fall within its immediate Cognizance, there is no higher Faculty to correct the Miſtake; how then can we imagine the Minds of Men to be ſo diſpoſed as to be under a Neceſſity of being deceived; which they muſt be, if a conſtant univerſal Appearance of Truth ſhould be only the Veil of Falſhood.

'Tis poſſible indeed, that Men ſhould be deceived in a Judgment founded upon the Reports of Senſe or Imagination; but the Notion of a God is matter of pure Thought and Reaſon, in the Conception of which Senſe and Imagination have no Share; and therefore it can never owe its Original to them.

If there be no God, notwithſtanding that there is the ſame Appearance of Evidence as there is for the Truth of any Thing elſe, then have we the ſame Reaſon to queſtion all our other Knowledge.

If Perception and Will are not the Iſſue and Effects of Matter and Motion, as is eaſily demonſtrable, the Exiſtence of intelligent Beings without a God is unconceivable and impoſſible; becauſe no other Cauſe of their Production can be aſſigned.

If we have any Reaſon to conclude, that Towns and Cities were built, and Kingdoms and

and Commonwealths were modelled by the Thought and Contrivance of intelligent Beings; we have much more Cauſe to believe, that the Univerſe was made, faſhion'd and diſpoſed by the Counſel and Wiſdom of ſome more perfect and capacious Mind.

'Tis a Principle of right Reaſon, that the Effect cannot be more excellent than its Cauſe, becauſe all that it hath cometh from that Principle which hath made it; therefore, if it be true, that there is ſome Wiſdom to be obſerved in the Diſpoſal of the ſeveral Parts of the Univerſe in its Motions and Government; if there be any intelligent Creatures, we muſt neceſſarily conclude, that God, who is the Author of all theſe Things, contains all theſe Perfections in the higheſt Degree.

If there is in Man a Soul, a Subſtance different from the Body, there muſt needs be in the Univerſe a Subſtance diſtinct from Matter, endowed with Underſtanding and Will; for ſince the Soul of Man is of that Kind, and that he is not of himſelf, ſince he does not exiſt neceſſarily, he muſt have received his Exiſtence from ſome other Cauſe, which ſubſiſts neceſſarily, and of itſelf.

There is, and there can be but one Being which does exiſt neceſſarily, and of itſelf, and that Being which exiſts neceſſarily, muſt have all Perfections: now that Being which exiſts neceſſarily, and therefore contains all Perfections, muſt be a Spirit, and cannot be a Body; then all that does exiſt as Matter and Body, muſt have received its Exiſtence from that all-perfect Being, which is a Spirit, and not a Body.

If to know one's ſelf is ſomething much more excellent than not to know one's ſelf, it muſt needs follow, that the firſt Being which does

exiſt

exiſt by himſelf, and hath all Perfections, muſt be endued with Knowledge.

To imagine God to be a Body or Matter, does evidently contradict four great Perfections of God; 1ſt. His Infiniteneſs, or Immenſity of his Being; 2dly. His Knowledge and Wiſdom; 3dly. His Freedom and Liberty; 4thly. His Goodneſs; for he is not good, who does not know what he does, nor does it freely.

Whatever Difficulty there may be in conceiving the Notion of a Spirit, yet the Atheiſt muſt grant the Thing, that there is a Being or Principle really diſtinct from Matter; or elſe ſhew how mere Matter, which is confeſſed by themſelves to be void of Senſe and Underſtanding, and to move neceſſarily, can produce any Thing that hath Senſe, Underſtanding, and Liberty.

There is no Neceſſity, that it ſhould have been any-where ſaid that God is a Spirit, it being the natural Notion of God, no more than it is neceſſary that it ſhould be told us that God is good, or that he is infinite, and eternal, and the like; or that the Scripture ſhould prove to us the Being of a God; all theſe are manifeſt by the Light of Nature, and if the Scripture mentions them, it is *ex abundanti*, and uſually in order to ſome further Purpoſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the Attributes of God.

ALL Kinds, and all Degrees of Perfection, are to be aſcribed to God, which either do not imply a plain Contradiction, or do not argue ſome Imperfection, or are not evidently inconſiſtent with ſome other and greater Perfection.

It is a fundamental Principle in Religion to take Care to reconcile the Attributes and Perfections of God to one another, for that is not a divine Perfection, which contradicts any other Perfection.

We are not to confine the Perfection of God to our Imagination, as if we could find out the Almighty to Perfection; but, on the contrary, to believe the Perfection of the divine Nature to be boundleſs and unlimited, and infinitely to exceed our higheſt Thoughts and Apprehenſions.

We muſt not frame Notions of the divine Perfections contrary to what they are in the Creature; but we muſt ſay, that the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God are all this which is in the Creature; and much more, which we are not able to comprehend.

We muſt not meaſure the Perfection of God by the Expreſſion of his Condeſcenſion, and becauſe he ſtoops to our Weakneſs, level him to our Infirmities; when God is ſaid to pity us, we are to conceive that the Mercy and Compaſ-

ſion

sion of God, without producing the Disquiet, do produce the Effects of the most sensible Pity.

If any Man ask why I say God is so or so, a Spirit, or good, or just; the best Reason that can be given, is, because these are Perfections, and the contrary to these are Imperfections.

Certainly there can be nothing more inconsistent with mere natural Reason, than to think God can be, or do no more than Man can comprehend; never any Nation or Person that owned a Deity, did ever attempt so to circumscribe him; we may as well mete out the Heaven with a Span, and measure the Waters in the Hollow of our Hands, and weigh the Mountains in some Scales, and the Hills in a little Balance, as think to circumscribe God in the narrow Limits of our Thoughts, or to bring that which is infinite, within the Compass of that which is finite.

An eternal Being hath all possible Perfections, that is, there is nothing conceivable, or in the Nature of Things possible, which, added to it, would give it any Advantage, or in any Sense render it more perfect than it is: this is plain from the very Notion of Possibility, which implieth a Power somewhere correspondent to the utmost Extent and Capacity of Things possible; so that to say a Thing is possible, is to say, that there is some Power capable of producing or having it; and therefore, if you suppose an eternal necessary Being to want any Perfection, what is imagined to be wanting to it, must be for that very Reason impossible; for it cannot be conceived to want what it is in its own Power to have, and it can receive nothing which it hath not, from any other Being, because no other Being of greater Power is conceivable; not a temporary Being, because the Existence and Perfection of all temporary Beings are derived from

that

that which is eternal; not an eternal neceſſary Being, becauſe this which is ſuppoſed imperfect, is as much an eternal neceſſary Being as the other, and therefore muſt have all the ſame Perfections; for why ſhould the Perfections of the one be limited, and thoſe of the other not? and whence ſhould this Impotence proceed in one eternal neceſſary Being, which was not in another, when neither of them hath any other Principle of its Exiſtence and Perfection but itſelf? There can be no Difference aſſigned or imagined between one eternal neceſſary Being and another; and therefore where-ever theſe Attributes are found, they muſt be accompanied with all poſſible Perfections.

The Eternity of God, and his Immenſity, and his Being of himſelf, how difficult ſoever they may be to be conceived, yet theſe Perfections muſt be granted to be ſomewhere; and therefore they may as well, nay much better, be aſcribed to God, in whom we ſuppoſe all other Perfections to meet, than to any thing elſe.

'Tis plain to any Man, who reflects upon the Ideas which are lodged in his Mind, that he hath a Notion of Time, and of the ſeveral Periods of it, which he can place at what Diſtance he pleaſeth, to meaſure the Duration of any thing by them; but never at ſuch a Diſtance, by all the Addition his Imagination is capable of, but that he ſtill can ſuppoſe ſome Being to exiſt, both before and after; and the Being before and after, which he cannot conceive any time or other being, he calls eternal.

As, according to our Manner of conceiving, we muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe the Immenſity of God to be an infinite Expanſion of his Eſſence, a Preſence of it to all Places, and imaginable Space; ſo muſt we ſuppoſe the Eternity of God

to be a perpetual Continuance co-exiſtent to all imaginable Succeſſion of Ages.

'Tis enough for our Purpoſe to know that God is ſo far immenſe, as to be included and circumſcribed by no Place, and to be excluded out of none; but that he is preſent every-where after an ineffable and unſearchable Manner, ſo that nothing can be conceived where God is not.

There are ſome things which God himſelf cannot do, not for want of Power, but becauſe it would imply an Imperfection in him: He can act nothing unbecoming his own Wiſdom and Goodneſs; he cannot do Miracles, when he ſees they will be to no good Purpoſe, but will be abuſed to a very ill one.

In a Being of all poſſible Perfection, there muſt of Neceſſity be a moſt exact Harmony throughout; and ſovereign Power or Authority can do nothing diſagreeable to ſovereign Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and Goodneſs.

'Tis not a Reſtraint or Impotency, but the royal Prerogative of the moſt abſolute King of Kings, that he wills to do nothing but what he can; and that he can do nothing which is repugnant to his divine Wiſdom, and eſſential Goodneſs. God cannot do what is unjuſt, nor ſay what is untrue, nor promiſe with a Mind to deceive. Our Saviour therefore could do no mighty Work in a Country of Unbelievers, becauſe it was not fit and reaſonable.

This we may eaſily be ſatisfied in, that infinite Power and Knowledge may be able to do and know many Things which we cannot conceive how they can be known or done, no more than a Child can imagine how a great Mathematician can demonſtrate his Propoſitions. Only this we are ſure of, as we can be of any thing, that

that no Power can do that which is evidently impossible, and implies a plain Contradiction.

It does in no wise contradict God's Goodness, that he does not, by his Omnipotency, interpose to prevent our Sin; for this had been to alter the Nature of Things, and not to let Man be the Creature he made him, capable of Reward and Punishment, according to the good or bad Use of his own free Choice.

Those Attributes that declare God's Goodness, as when he is said to be gracious, merciful, and long-suffering, shew what God is in himself, and delights to be; those which declare his Wrath and Severity, shew what he is upon Provocation, and the Occasion of Sin; not what he chuseth to be, but what we do, as it were, compel and necessitate him to be.

The Pleasure of being good, and of doing Good, is the chief Happiness of God himself.

That God is essentially wise, and good, and holy, and just, our own Reason, and the Ideas of a Being absolutely perfect, might convince us; but that these glorious Attributes should exert themselves in a Work so wonderful, so beneficial, as the Redemption of lost sinful Man, by the Death and Sacrifice of his own Son; this is an Instance of Mercy, of Wisdom, and Holiness, and Justice, which could never have entered into any Man's Head.

The Love of God towards Men in the Work of our Redemption, is set off by comparing his infinite Greatness with our Meanness. 2*dly*, By considering the Condition we were in, *viz.* in Corruption and Sin. 3*dly*, In that it is not we have prevented him, and sued him by our Repentance, but it is he who hath first loved us. 4*thly*, By the Need we stood in that God should love us, and look upon us in his Mercy; for without

it, our Salvation was desperate. *5thly*, By that Distinction God hath made between Men and the apostate Angels. *6thly*, By the Greatness of the Gift God has made us, having given us not his Creatures, but his beloved Son. *7thly*, By the Greatness of those Sufferings he hath exposed him to for our Salvation.

The best Man in the World does not think himself bound to do all the Good he can to every one he meets; he will make a Difference between a Child and a Servant, between a Friend and an Enemy, between a good and a bad Man; and much more must a good Prince and a good Magistrate do so, and much more must God, who is the supreme and sovereign Lord of the World. We have no Reason to complain of God, if he deals with us as we think is just and reasonable to deal with one another.

The Goodness and Mercy of God is so far beyond and before that of any Creature, that they may be for ever approaching nearer to it, and yet never overtake it.

God hath no-where said, that he will be merciful to those, who upon the Score of his Mercy are bold with him, and presume to offend him: There is Forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, but not that he may be despised and affronted.

God is as well just as merciful, and his Justice will at last surely and heavily avenge the Abuse of his Mercy, and there cannot be a greater Abuse of his Mercy, than to sin in Hope of it.

Tho' God suffers long, he will not suffer always; we may provoke God so long, till he can forbear no longer, without Injury and Dishonour to his Wisdom, and Justice, and Holiness.

The Goodness of God in sparing us, is in some respect greater than his Goodness in creating us; because he had no Provocation not to make us, but we provoke him daily to destroy us.

He that will confront his Benefits received from God with his Sins committed, cannot but equally wonder at God's Mercy in continuing his Blessings, in despight of all his Provocations, and at his own Baseness in continuing his Provocations, in despight of all those Blessings.

Tho' we can expect and rely on no other Grace, but what God has promised in his Gospel, yet God does not absolutely confine himself, nor must we confine his Grace.

It does not signify any thing to say, if God wills not the Death of a Sinner, he might prevent it, since he is Omnipotent: For God does not always make Use of his Almighty Power in hindering those things which he wills not; in preventing what depends on the free Will of Man, he makes use of such Means as are most suitable to a free Agent; such as Precepts, Exhortations, Promises, Threatnings, and the Assistance of the Spirit, all which are as so many plain Evidences, that God wills not the Death of a Sinner.

Justice requires the Punishment of Sinners, but Goodness is inclin'd to spare; and Wisdom judgeth when and in what Manner it is fit to punish or to spare: An incurable Sinner is the Object of strict and rigorous Justice; a corrigible Sinner is the Object both of Justice and Goodness.

This we must suppose to be the Difference between the Case of apostate Angels, and of fallen Man, and therefore Justice immediately seized on those apostate Spirits; but God, in infinite Goodness, promised a Saviour to Mankind.

Let us conſider what Enormity it is to find, in the Goodneſs of God, a Reaſon which makes us take the Reſolution to offend him grievouſly.

Goodness is ſo great and neceſſary a Perfection, that without it there can be no other; it giveth Perfection to all other Excellencies, which may cauſe Fear and Amazement in us; but nothing but Goodneſs can command ſincere Love and Veneration.

We muſt not attribute ſuch a Sovereignty to God, as contradicts his Goodneſs, or other Attributes: For it ſignifieth nothing, that God is good, and juſt, and wiſe, if his Sovereignty may at any time act contrary to theſe Perfections.

We muſt not expect, that God will manifeſt his Power, when we think there is Occaſion for it; but when it ſeems beſt to him, he will ſo employ his Omnipotence, as to manifeſt his Goodneſs and Wiſdom.

To ſay that God is good and juſt, but not good and juſt as Men underſtand Goodneſs and Juſtice, is to ſay, that we have no natural Notion of the Goodneſs and Juſtice of God, and then we can have no natural Notion of a God. For, if the natural Notion of a God is, that he is juſt and good, it ſeems hard to think, that we ſhould have a natural Notion of a good and juſt God, without having any natural Notion what his Juſtice and Goodneſs is. This then muſt be laid down as a ſtanding Rule, that we muſt never attribute any thing to God, which contradicts the natural Notions, which we have of Juſtice and Goodneſs, under a Pretence that God is unaccountable, and his Ways and Judgments unſearchable; for it is not the Will of God, which is always directed by Goodneſs and Juſtice, that is unaccountable, but his Wiſdom; not the ſtanding Rules of his Providence, which are

nothing

nothing else but perfect and unerring Justice and Goodness, but the Application of particular Events to these Rules.

Tho' the general Notion of Justice and Righteousness is the same, both with respect to God and Men, yet God may do that very justly, which Men cannot justly do; as a Prince may exercise some Acts of Justice, which a private Man must not do.

Let us lay down this as a Foundation, that how unaccountable soever sovereign and absolute Will and Power is, it neither can, nor will do any Wrong. For it is nothing else but absolute and sovereign Justice and Goodness. Absolute Power is the only Security we have against suffering Wrong; for it will do no Wrong itself, but will rectify all the Wrongs which are done by inferior Powers, which none but an absolute and sovereign Power can do: The firm Belief of this will give great Relief and Satisfaction to our Minds, under all the unaccountable Passages of Providence: For tho' absolute Power be always just and good, yet its Ways are sometimes past finding out.

Arbitrary Will and Power is the very worst Notion we can have of God; it destroys our Love to him, our Hope and Confidence in him, unless we can fancy him as partial to us, as we are to ourselves; it turns Religion into a superstitious Dread of God, or hypocritical Flatteries; destroys the Notion of Good and Evil, or all Regard to them, while we think God takes no Notice of them himself.

It is unconceivable how the Justice of God can be manifested by an Act, not of Justice, but of absolute Dominion: True it is, an Act of Dominion may also be an Act of divine Justice, and thereby the Justice of God may be manifested;

but 'tis impoſſible that it ſhould be manifeſted by any other Act than that of Juſtice.

If God does not puniſh a righteous Son for the Sins of his Father, as he aſſures us, then to viſit the Iniquities of the Father upon the Children, muſt be confined only to ſuch Children as inherit the Vices, and imitate the Wickedneſs of their Parents; that is, God hath threatned to puniſh the wicked Children of wicked Parents, and that more certainly, and more ſeverely, than other bad Men ordinarily are: The wicked Children of wicked Parents have their own and their Fathers Sin to haſten and increaſe their Puniſhments; and the righteous Children of righteous Parents have their own and their Fathers Virtues to ſecure and to augment their Rewards. He who has ſo wiſely ordered and diſpoſed every thing he has made to the moſt proper Ends, hath therefore exerciſed his Power ſo far and no farther, becauſe it was moſt agreeable to his Wiſdom ſo to do.

Is there not infinite Wiſdom required to know, what infinite Power only can effect?

He that conſiders a Watch, is in the right to conclude from the Connexion of its Wheels, that it muſt needs be the Work of an intelligent Being; and it would be in him a wrong Way of arguing, to draw an Inference oppoſite to that, becauſe there are ſome Wheels in that Machine, whoſe Uſes he does not know: Likewiſe, to know the Wiſdom of the Creator, which is manifeſt in his Works, 'tis enough to know the general Laws of Nature, without giving a good Account of every thing in particular.

All the Changes and Emendations that the Atheiſts would make in our Senſes, are ſo far from being Improvements, that they would prove the utter Ruin and Extirpation of Mankind.

'Tis

'Tis Man's Property to do ſmall things with great Engines; but it is God's Property to work out the greateſt things by the moſt natural and eaſy Ways.

If we allow ourſelves to have any Ideas of Power and Knowledge, we muſt confeſs, that Power is inſeparable from Knowledge, and that there is no Power, but there is ſome Knowledge commenſurate to it; it being utterly unconceivable, that any thing ſhould be, or be made, and there ſhould be no Being that knows how it came to be, or in what manner it was produced.

To ſay that we cannot believe the Fore-knowledge of God, unleſs we can make out the particular manner of it, is more unreaſonable, than if an ignorant Man ſhould deny a difficult Propoſition in *Euclid* or *Archimedes* to be demonſtrated, becauſe he knows not how to demonſtrate it.

Things do not come to paſs becauſe they were fore-known; but becauſe they were to come to paſs, therefore they were fore-known.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Light of Nature, and real Difference between Good and Evil.

WHAT is natural to all Men, is from God the Author of their Nature; and what is from him, muſt needs be no vain thing, he being neither capable of deceiving, or of being deceived.

There

THERE is no better way to prove any thing to be natural to any kind of Being, than if it be generally found in the whole Kind; and, indeed, by what other Argument can we prove, that Reaſon and Speech, and an Inclination to Society, are natural to Men, but that theſe belong to the whole Kind? Another Mark of what is natural, is that which is the firſt and original Senſe of human Nature, and that which is ſo deeply fix'd in our Minds, that no Art or Induſtry can wholly root it out; and all this proves, that the Preſages of Conſcience, the Hopes good Men have of a Reward, and the Fear of Puniſhment and Vengeance which haunts bad Men, are the natural Senſe of Men's Mind.

THERE is no greater Sign that any thing is contrary to Nature, than if it be deteſted by the whole Kind.

THE ſame way that we are aſſured of our own Being, or of any ſimple Perception whatſoever; we are likewiſe aſſured of the Agreement and Connexion of ſome things, and the Diſagreement and Inconſiſtency of others, *viz.* by ſuch an immediate Conſciouſneſs, as we can neither reſiſt nor diſtruſt.

IT muſt be granted, that we are as certain that ſuch and ſuch things ought or ought not to be done, as that ſuch and ſuch things are or are not after ſuch a manner. For Example, I may be as fully ſatisfied that I ought to deſire and endeavour after my own Happineſs, and that I ought not to take away the Happineſs of another Man, when I know I ſhall not add to my own by it, as I can be of the Truth of theſe Propoſitions, that every thing which moves is, that the ſame thing cannot poſſibly exiſt, and not exiſt at the ſame time; that is, in both theſe Inſtances, the things aſſented to, have an equal

Suitableneſs

Suitableneſs and Agreeableneſs to our Reaſon; and the like Force and Violence would be offered to our Underſtandings by a Denial of either, which is the only Ground and Standard of Certainty aſſignable by us.

The Certainty and Evidence of moral Truths is, as in all other kind of Knowledge, greater or leſs, according as the Propoſitions conſidered are nearer to, or farther from, the firſt general Axioms or Rules of Morality, from whence all the reſt are deduced: That of ſeeking of our own Happineſs, *&c.* and ſuch as immediately follow from hence, as that we ought to prefer a greater Good or Pleaſure, to a leſs, a leſſer Evil, or Pain to a greater, and the like, are as evident as any metaphyſical or mathematical Axioms whatever: But other moral Duties concerning the Worſhip of God, Obedience to Parents, which are leſs general, have not the ſame Degree of Evidence, becauſe the Certainty and Neceſſity of the Connexion of thoſe Actions with our own Happineſs, is not ſo clearly diſcoverable.

Some things are good, becauſe commanded; but other things are commanded, becauſe good.

There is an eternal Reaſon why that which is good, ſhould be ſo and required; and why that which is evil, ſhould be ſo and forbidden; which depends not ſo much on the divine Will, as the divine Nature: Otherwiſe, conſidered in itſelf, it were no more faulty to murder a Parent, than to kill a Fly; nor to rob a Traveller, than to chaſe a Deer; but the Conſcience of the moſt profligate Wretch, would ſtartle at ſuch an Aſſertion.

Tho' the Sin be ſecret, and the guilty Perſon powerful, not within the Cognizance or Reach of human Juſtice, yet Conſcience hath a Rack within,

within, and causeth Pain and Anxiety, by fearful Expectations of Judgment to come.

It is the hardest thing in the World to get rid of the natural Sense of the Difference between Good and Evil, because every particular Man, when he hath any Kindness or any Injury done him, feels the Difference, and all well grounded Societies are forced, for their own Preservation, to make a Difference between them.

There are some things that have a natural Evil and Deformity in them, as Perjury, Perfidiousness, Unrighteousness, and Ingratitude, which are things not only condemned by the positive Laws and Constitutions of particular Nations and Governments, but by the general Verdict of human Nature; and the Virtues, contrary to these, have a natural Goodness and Comeliness in them: This will most evidently appear by putting this Supposition; suppose the Reverse of all that which we now call Virtue, were solemnly enacted, and the Practice of Fraud, Rapine, and Perjury, and Falseness to a Man's Word, and all manner of Vice and Wickedness, were established by a Law: I ask now, would that which we now call Vice, in Process of time, gain the Reputation of Virtue; and that which we now call Virtue, grow odious and contemptible to human Nature? If it would not, then is there something in the Nature of Good and Evil, of Virtue and Vice, which does not depend upon the Pleasure of Authority, nor is subject to any arbitrary Constitution; but that it would not be thus, I am very certain, because no Government could subsist upon these Terms.

To make Justice and Goodness to depend wholly upon the Will of God, that therefore any thing is just and good, because God wills it, suppose

ſuppoſes that Juſtice and Goodneſs hath no ſtable Nature of its own, but may at any time change its Nature with the Will of God; and it is impoſſible to prove, that the Will of God can't change as the Wills of Men do, if it have no eternal and unchangeable Rule, or be not eternal and unchangeable Goodneſs itſelf.

I cannot imagine how ſome Divines could teach, that the moral Law did depend from the good Pleaſure of God; for it is certain, that the Worſhip and Obedience which reaſonable Creatures owe to their Creator, is a neceſſary Conſequence of the ſovereign Perfection of God, of the Dependence of the Creatures in their Being and Operations, as alſo of thoſe Benefits they receive from the Goodneſs of their Creator: Likewiſe the Duty of Man towards his Neighbour is of an indiſpenſable Neceſſity for the Preſervation of the civil Society.

The natural Law, conſidered in itſelf, is the eternal and immutable Will of God, which he makes known to us by thoſe natural Impreſſions, on which we frame the Notions of that Law; which therefore would ſtill be the ſame, tho' Men ſhould not think on it, ſince the Will of God does eternally ſubſiſt.

The righteſt Notion we can have of Eternity is, that a thing is eternal, when it hath a neceſſary Exiſtence; that is, that we cannot conceive that it might not be; ſo, as we cannot conceive that there ſhould have been a Time in which the natural Notions of Good and Evil were falſe, and that it may happen that they ſhould be ſo, they have a neceſſary Truth, and conſequently eternal; the Immutability follows from Eternity; then the natural Law is immutable as well as eternal.

A Proof that we are ſenſible that Crime is an Evil, is, that we cannot bear to be upbraided

with any; the moſt Infamous would be thought honeſt; a Robber is offended, if he be called ſo; an Impoſtor flieth out into a Paſſion, if he be called a Lyar, becauſe every Body is ſenſible that Robbery and Lying are ſhameful; that is to be obſerved in Children, in whom Nature appears ſuch as it is, when they have not yet been prepoſſed with any other Sentiments but thoſe it inſpires; they are aſhamed of any wicked Action, they hide themſelves to do it, tho' they are not acquainted yet with what is called Evil, and that what they do is liable to Puniſhment.

THE only Difference between moral and natural Good is this, that moral Good and Evil is in the Will and Choice, natural Good and Evil is in the Nature of Things; that which is good or hurtful to ourſelves and others, is naturally Good or Evil; to love, to chuſe, to do that which is good or hurtful to ourſelves or others, is morally good or evil, or is the Good or Evil of our Choice and Actions.

CHAP. V.

Of CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE is nothing elſe but the Judgment of a Man's own Mind concerning the Morality of his Actions, that is the Good, or Evil, or Indifferency of them, telling us what is commanded by God, and conſequently our Duty; what is forbidden by him, and conſequently ſinful; what neither commanded nor forbidden, and conſequently indifferent.

When Conscience does give Judgment of us, when it absolutely acquits, or absolutely condemns us, we may depend on it, that God will judge us as our Consciences do: God may condemn, when Conscience does not judge; tho' he will not condemn, when a judging Conscience does not condemn.

The Judgment of Conscience is that Judgment, which we pass on ourselves from comparing our Lives with the Rule whereby we shall be judged, and this Judgment cannot deceive us; but if we alter our Rule of Judging, if Conscience judge by one Rule, and God by another, then there is no wonder if their Judgments differ.

Men may be guilty of the greatest Sins in following an erroneous Conscience, as appears by St. *Paul*, who owns, that tho' he acted according to the Persuasion of his Conscience, he had been a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and Injurious, and a Murderer.

Tho' my Conscience should err in telling me such a Thing were unlawful, yet so long as I were so persuaded, it were Sin for me to do that Thing; for in that Case my Will consents to the doing a Thing which I believe to be displeasing to God.

Guilt is nothing but Trouble arising in our Minds from a Consciousness of having done contrary to what we are verily persuaded was our Duty.

There is no such frightful Apparition in the World as a Man's own guilty and terrified Conscience staring him in the Face; a Spirit that is thus wounded who can bear? On the contrary, it is as grateful and pleasing to a good Man to do Good, as to an hungry Man to eat, or a thirsty Man to drink; wherefore a good Conscience is said to be a continual Feast.

The

THE great Terror and Anxiety of Mind attending the Consciousness of any heinous Sin, proceeds from that Sense of a Connection between Sin and Punishment, deeply imprinted upon the Soul of Man by the Finger of God, which is one great Argument of the Existence of a Deity.

No Man accuseth himself for not flying in the Air, or walking upon the Water; nor owns himself guilty for the Non-observance of any Laws but such as have Power to oblige him; and therefore, the close Pangs and Checks of Conscience are an irrefragable Evidence, that Men do inwardly assent to the Justice and Authority of those divine Rules, which their Actions, yea often their Words too, do most oppugn.

THERE is a wide Difference between the Impudence of a Criminal, and the Confidence and Assurance of a clear Conscience; the one is sensible and satisfied that there is no Cause for Shame; the other is conscious to himself, that there is Cause; but suppresseth all he can the Sense of it, and will needs face down the World, that he hath no Guilt or Regret in his own Mind for any Thing that he hath done.

THE most impudent Sinners in the World were at first modest; no Man ever yet began at the top of Villainy, but the Advance is still gradual, from one Degree to another; each Commission smoothing and glibbing the Way to the next; and there is left even in the worst of Men a natural Sense of the Evil and Unreasonableness of Sin, which can hardly be ever totally extinguished in human Nature.

One may say of the Man that keeps a good Conscience, that he is secure against God and Man; God can do Him no harm, not for want of Power, but for want of Will, which is regulated by his Truth and Justice; he is also secure in respect

respect of Men, because he is under the Protection of the Almighty; and if any there be that would do him harm, they shall either be restrained by the divine Providence, or if they be permitted to injure him, it shall tend only to the Exercise and Improvement of his Faith and Patience, and enhancing his future Reward at the great Day.

If we would keep a Conscience void of Offence, let us always be calm and considerate, humble and willing to learn; let us free ourselves from Prejudice and Passion, from Self-conceit and Self-interest; and then, if we follow the Judgment of our Minds in what we do, we have done what we can to please God.

It is God makes us find Virtue lovely and amiable, as it is he makes us taste that Sugar is sweet.

CHAP. VI.

Of Religion in general, and of revealed Religion in particular.

RELIGION, in short, being whatever we are obliged to by God, to prove that there is such a thing as Religion, it must be shewn that Man is capable of being obliged to act as he is directed, that God has a Power of obliging him to do what he commands; and that Man is actually under such an Obligation, and that God does actually will or require something of him. Now an Obligation with respect to Man is nothing else but such Reason or Motive, as when

duly offered to him, neceſſarily determines him to chuſe one way of acting before another, and this Reaſon or Motive can be nothing elſe but a greater Degree either of Happineſs to be obtained, or Miſery to be avoided, by acting thus, than (all Things conſidered) can be obtained or avoided by any other way.

THE ſhorteſt therefore and ſureſt Way of convincing the moſt perverſe Diſputers of this World, that they are obliged to perform all the particular Duties of human Life required of them, is to prove to them, that there is a God who hath annexed exceeding Happineſs to the Practice, and extreme Miſery to the Neglect of theſe Things, it being utterly impoſſible for them to doubt whether they ſhould chuſe to be happy rather than miſerable, and perfectly abſurd to enquire why they ſhould ſeek their own Happineſs.

'TIS impoſſible to perſuade a Man, who does not yet believe any Religion at all, to become religious, except it can plainly, or probably at leaſt be made out to him, that he ſhall better his Condition by it; and whoever fairly conſults himſelf, will find that he neither does, nor can act upon any other Ground.

No one hath either a Right or Power of obliging another to act according to his Directions, any farther than he has a Power of contributing to the Happineſs or Miſery of that Being which he undertakes to govern: Men may indeed by an over-ruling Power be forced to do what is commanded them; but that is not a rational Obligation, which is acknowledged and ſubmitted to, as ſuitable and agreeable to Reaſon, and performed with the full Concurrence of the Will of thoſe who obey it.

WHATEVER Reaſons are alledged for our Duty and Obedience to Maſters, Parents or

Princes, or for their Right of commanding us, will conclude more ſtrongly upon us, when we conſider ourſelves with Relation to God; for he is our Creator and Parent, the Author of our Being and Nature, and of all the Powers and Capacities belonging to it; and we are his Creatures, the Iſſue of his Power, and Workmanſhip of his Hands; he is our Protector, Governor and Maſter, and we are his Dependents, Subjects and Servants; he is our Benefactor, and the Author of all our Happineſs, and we obliged and indebted to him for whatever we enjoy.

It is not conceivable that a Creature ſhould be without a Law; for this is to make it ſupreme and independent; ſupreme, in not being liable to a ſuperior Power to confine and order it; independent, as to its Being and Operations, for Dependence neceſſarily infers Subjection.

The Perfection of every Thing is to attain its true and proper End; and the End of all thoſe Gifts and Endowments which God hath given us, is to glorify the Giver.

It is evident, that Man is an improveable Creature, not created at firſt in the utmoſt Perfection of his Nature, nor put into the happieſt State he is capable of, but trained up to Perfection and Happineſs by Degrees: *Adam* himſelf, in a State of Innocence, was but a Probationer for Immortality, and it is moſt probable, that had he continued innocent, and refined and exalted his Nature by the Practice of divine Vertues, he ſhould not always have lived in this World; this Life then being only in Order to the next, the great Buſineſs we have to do in this World, is to prepare ourſelves for Immortality and Glory.

If Men are born ſociable Creatures, if they naturally deſire Society, and Society cannot poſ-

ſibly ſubſiſt without Religion, then is Religion as agreeable to the Nature of Man, and as neceſſary to his Happineſs, as Converſation and living together; and were it not for other Mens having Religion, the Atheiſt would find it very uncomfortable living in the World.

All Duties and Obligations which we apprehend ourſelves under, with reſpect to ourſelves or others, are the Effect of our Obligation to God; the Senſe of which Obligation renders all our Actions, that are duly influenced by it, religious, tho' God be not the immediate Object of them.

We may very juſtly laugh at the Folly of thoſe who confeſs, that Men are made for Society, and who will not own that they are made for Religion; thoſe Bonds which tie them to God being incomparably ſtronger, and more natural, than thoſe which join them to one another; for if it be Intereſt that unites Men, Reaſon tells us, that God can do us more Good than his Creatures; if it be Gratitude, we are more beholden to God than to Men; if it be Fear, (as *Hobbes* pretends) God deſerves to be feared above all Things; if it be Love, we ought to love God more than any other Object.

If it be by all theſe Ties together, that Men find themſelves inclined to Society; who does not ſee, that all theſe Principles put together, incline them ſtill much better to Religion?

All that is in Man ſeeks (as it were) God; the unbounded Curioſity of our Minds, which continually aſpires after the Knowledge of new Objects, looks after him, becauſe he includes all Things in the Eminency of his Nature; the unſatiable Deſires of our Hearts, which cannot be ſatisfied by all that we ſee, requires that ſupreme Good which contains all Excellencies.

Since God is the Spring, from whence flows all Pleasure, and since he is Almighty, it is manifest that no Body can be happy against his Will; therefore, those that oppose him, cannot pretend to Happiness; we oppose God, when we do not his Will: Can we say that God is obliged to give himself to those who are not acceptable to him?

As Politicks should endeavour in vain to unite Men under the Laws of the Civil Government, if Men were not born for Society; so it would be in vain to endeavour to teach them Religions, if they were not naturally disposed to it by the Principles of natural Religion.

As the Difference of Civil Governments, is no Hindrance to the Uniformity of Inclinations, to Union and Society; so the Difference of Religions does not destroy the Uniformity of those Principles, which dispose us to Religion.

Men generally act as much against Reason, as against Religion; therefore it is no more an Argument, that there is no true Religion, because so few practise it as they ought, than that there can be no true Reason, because the Lives of so many Men contradict it.

Will any Man suppose, that Temperance does not preserve Health, tho' he should see his Physician run into Excess; or that Poison will not kill, tho' the Man who tells him so, and adviseth him against it, be so desperate as to take it himself?

What would be the Face of the World, if every Body was at Liberty to do what he pleased? Let us imagine a Ship, in which, every Seaman acts without any Dependence from the Pilot. Let us imagine an Army, in which no Soldier obeys his Captain or General. Let us imagine a State, where every one does what he lists, and

cares neither for Laws nor Magiſtrates. Let us imagine the Confuſion and Diſorder that would naturally and unavoidably follow ſuch an immoderate Licence; and then let us judge, whether Men being not able to live without ſome Subordination and Subjection one towards another, they are in the Right to be willing to rid themſelves of it, in Relation to God.

RELIGION is, in its own Nature, ſo fitted and ſuited to the Nature of Man, and ſo proportioned to the original Diſpoſitions and Deſires of the Soul, as by a proper Tendency and Efficacy, to promote his Happineſs.

THE Principles of natural Religion are the Foundation of that which is revealed; and therefore, in Reaſon, nothing can be admitted to be a Revelation from God, which plainly contradicts them, that is, thoſe Apprehenſions which Men naturally have of the divine Perfections, and the clear Notions of Good and Evil, which are imprinted upon our Natures.

NOTHING ought to be received as a divine Doctrine, without good Evidence that it is ſo; that is, without ſome Argument to ſatisfy a prudent and conſiderate Man. Now (ſuppoſing there be nothing in the Matter of the Revelation, that is evidently contrary to the Principles of natural Religion, nor to any former Revelation, which hath already received a greater and more ſolemn Atteſtation from God) Miracles are owned by all Mankind, to be a ſufficient Teſtimony to any Perſon or Doctrine, that they are from God.

The natural Law or Religion having been corrupted, a ſecond Revelation hath been neceſſary, that ſhould reveal to us Objects greater than thoſe of our Paſſions, that ſhould take away all thoſe fooliſh and ridiculous Notions

Men

Men had conceived of the Deity; that, instead of framing an Idea of God agreeable to the Dispositions of their Hearts, should teach them to frame the Dispositions of their Hearts, by the Notion of a God who must be conceived holy, just, and having all other possible Perfections; that should lay an Obligation upon Men, to mortify those Desires which seduce them, and to curb those Passions which make them break the most sacred Rights; that should prescribe Justice and Equity, as indispensable Duties; that should not only take away all evil Passions, but even the Root of them, by forbidding the Concupiscence; that should strictly unite Men among themselves, and with God.

God having a Mind to remedy the Misery of Man, hath set him down in Writing his Duty, when he was no more able to learn it by the Voice of Nature; nevertheless we could know it, if we would sometimes reflect upon ourselves, since those Sentiments God hath given us, are too lively not to be perceived, as soon as we mind them.

As Man is not at Liberty to have a Religion, or to have none, so it is not in the Power of his Will or Fancy to make himself such a one as he pleaseth; wherefore, St. *Paul* calls Superstitions ἐθελοθρησκείας *i. e.* voluntary Worships; and indeed Religion ought to consist in Obedience of Faith, Obedience of Service, and Obedience of Manners; what does not bear these Characters, cannot be acceptable to God.

The Light of Nature taught us, that there is a God, great, good, *&c.* in the highest Degree; but it represented him as Man's Enemy, without supplying him with any Means to render him propitious; it taught, that Man is made to serve God with a religious Worship, but it did not teach him what that religious Worship ought to

be, and left him engaged in a thouſand ſuperſtitious ones; it taught him that we are made for a ſupreme Good, and at the ſame Time left us in a miſerable State, without giving us any Means to come out of it, or ſhewing us what our greateſt Good did conſiſt in, and the Ways to attain it; it was then neceſſary, that God ſhould give us a ſupernatural Revelation to draw us out of that perplexed State; 'tis what *Jeſus Chriſt*'s Revelation hath happily performed.

There are I do not know how many Things revealed by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which we can have no Knowledge of by the Light of Nature; of that Order are the Trinity of Perſons, the Incarnation, the heavenly Felicity, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and in a Word, all the Myſteries of the Oeconomy of *Chriſt*; for in Nature, there is nothing but God Creator; nothing appears of God Redeemer, becauſe Redemption is an Oeconomy which has taken Place only by Reaſon of Sin.

If *Adam* had not ſinned, it had been only ſaid, *It is eternal Life to know Thee, the only true God*; but ſince he ſinned, it hath been needful to add, *and him whom thou haſt ſent.*

If it were revealed in the Scripture, that the ſame Thing may be, and not be at the ſame Time, I could have no Reaſon to believe that, becauſe, if that were true, I could have no Aſſurance that the Scripture was a divine Revelation, or that it were to be believed, if it were; for then a divine Revelation may be no divine Revelation; and when I am bound to believe a Thing, I may be bound at the ſame Time not to believe it, and ſo all Things would fall into Uncertainty; and the Foundation of all Aſſurance, and of all Duty and Obedience, both of Faith and Practice, would be taken away.

If we do but conſider the great Importance of Religion, we will quickly ſee, that it is well worth our while, to be at ſome Pains to ſatisfy ourſelves fully, whether Religion be true or not. In a Matter of ſuch Moment, it becomes not a wiſe Man to be determined by a Jeſt, or a Quibble; we will likewiſe readily ſee, that of the two, we had much better be miſtaken in believing the Truth of Religion, tho' it be falſe, than disbelieving it, if indeed it be true; the greateſt Damage we can ſuffer by Over-credulity, in caſe Religion be all a Cheat, is infinitely leſs, than will be the Conſequence of unreaſonable Infidelity, if indeed Religion be true.

If it be poſſible that there may be a ſtanding Revelation, it is very probable that there is one; for from the natural Notion that we have of the Goodneſs of God, it may be fairly argued, that he is not wanting to Men in the neceſſary Means to Salvation; and therefore it being evident, that there are not new Revelations made every Day, it may reaſonably be concluded, that the Reaſon is, becauſe there is already ſome ſtanding Revelation of God's Will extant, that is ſufficient to direct us in the Way to Happineſs; and if there be already any ſuch ſtanding Revelation extant, it may be ſtrongly preſumed, that it is that which we have in the holy Scripture, becauſe there is no other Book that we know of, which hath ſuch good Evidences of divine Authority and Inſpiration as that hath.

If Men may be allowed to disbelieve a Revelation which hath all the Evidence and Proof that any Revelation can have, it makes it impoſſible for God to reveal his Will to the World; at leaſt, to give us ſuch a ſtanding Revelation, as may be a certain Rule of Faith to all Ages.

'Tis

'Tis ridiculous to ask for other kind of Proof than the Nature of the Thing in queſtion will bear, it being the ſame as to deſire that the Nature of Things ſhould be changed; and therefore to call for mathematical Demonſtration in Point of Religion, is as much as to ſay, let Religion be turned into Mathematicks, and we will believe it: 'Tis likewiſe very abſurd for Perſons to call for more and greater Proof of Religion, before they have confuted any one of thoſe Arguments that have been already advanced.

If God can reveal any thing to Man which he did not know before, (as he certainly can) 'tis likewiſe as certain, that that Man to whom ſuch Diſcovery is made, may be undeceivably convinced, that the Revelation came from God; the ſame God who gave him the Faculty of diſcerning betwixt Truth and Falſhood in his acquired Knowledge, can enable him to diſtinguiſh as certainly betwixt his own Attainments and divine Communications: He may judge that ſuch thing was revealed to him by God, with the ſame Satisfaction and Acquieſcence of Mind, and with the ſame Impoſſibility of entertaining a Doubt, notwithſtanding all his Endeavours to diſtruſt himſelf, as he judges any Propoſition is true, in which the Connexion of the ſimpleſt and moſt known Ideas is irreſiſtibly perceived. Evidence of Perception is the only Standard of Truth in all Caſes, and tho' ſeveral Men may have been deceived in thinking ſome Things were revealed to them by God, which were not ſo revealed; this is no more an Argument, that a Man cannot be certain of any Revelation, than 'tis an Argument for univerſal Scepticiſm, that ſome Men have been miſtaken in what they thought ſelf-evident Propoſitions and Demonſtrations;

ſtrations: Does it follow, that becauſe a Man may think himſelf awake, when he is in a Dream, he can therefore never be ſure that he is awake? And as little does it follow, that becauſe ſome Perſons of weak and diſtempered Brains have thought they have had Revelations, therefore no ſober or judicious Man in his right Wits, can ever be ſure of a Revelation.

God hath, in great Mercy to Mankind, done that which is abundantly ſufficient to convince thoſe who are of a teachable Temper and Diſpoſition; but in great Wiſdom and Juſtice, he hath not thought fit to provide any Remedy for the wilful Obſtinacy and intractable Perverteneſs of Men.

Men are unwilling to believe any thing to be true which contradicts their Vices; but let Men firſt practiſe the Virtues, the moral Virtues, which our Religion injoins, and then let them diſprove it if they can. The Concern they have to ſet up natural againſt revealed Religion, proceeds merely from hence, that by natural Religion, they mean no more than juſt what they pleaſe themſelves, or what they judge convenient in every Caſe and Occaſion; whereas revealed Religion is a fixt and determined thing, and preſcribes certain Rules and Laws for the Government of our Lives.

Religion is our Direction, our Way to Heaven and Happineſs; but will any Man ſay, that becauſe there are many wrong Ways, therefore there is none right? 'Tis as if he would prove, that becauſe there are ſo many curve Lines, therefore there can be none right; but quite contrary, as all Obliquity ſuppoſes Rectitude, from which it declines, ſo Vice ſuppoſeth Virtue, and Error in Religion muſt ſuppoſe Truth in Religion; for whatever is contrary to any thing, neceſſarily implieth

implieth the Being of that to which it is contrary; and that which is not, can have nothing contrary to it.

Differences in Religion are suffered by Almighty God, as all other Sins are; because it is the Design of Religion not to compel Men, but to persuade and exhort them, and to permit them to be guilty of all manner of Sin, whilst it offers the most prevailing Arguments and Motives against it.

If Men did but truly live up to the Principles of natural Religion, they would easily be convinced, that the Christian Religion, which is so suitable thereto, is from God.

The End of Religion is to teach Men to serve God, to make 'em holy and happy.

As Knowledge in general is necessary to Religion, so more particularly the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures is necessary to our eternal Salvation; because they are the great and standing Revelation of God to Mankind, wherein the Nature of God, and his Will concerning our Duty, and the Terms and Conditions of our eternal Happiness in another World, are fully and plainly declared to us.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Concerning the Holy Scripture, its divine Authority, Style, Interpretation, its various Readings, and our Obligation to read it.

IF it be inquired why we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, the Answer is, Upon the Account of the Miracles and Prophecies, which concurring with all other Circumstance requisite in a Revelation, especially the Goodness of their Doctrine, confirm the Truth of them: If it be asked how we know that those Prophecies and Miracles are true and effectual, and not feigned and insufficient; I answer, Because we have them so related and attested, that considered barely as matter of Fact, they have all the Credibility that any matter of Fact is capable of: Who doubts there was an *Alexander*, a *Julius Cæsar* or *Augustus*? But who ever laid down their Lives in Attestation of that, or any human Composure, as Multitudes of Men have done for the Bible?

The Miracles related in Scripture, will as effectually prove a divine Revelation to us, as they could to those that saw them; but the Difference is, that they believed their Senses, and we believe them. Let us consider History as a Medium, by which these Miracles become known to us, and compare this Medium with that of

Sight. If a Man would be ſceptical, he might Doubt whether any Medium of Sight be ſo fitly diſpoſed, as to repreſent Objects in their due Proportion, and proper Shape; he might ſuſpect, that any Miracles which he could ſee were falſe, or wrought only to amuſe or deceive him; and there would be no way to ſatisfy ſuch an one, but by telling him, That this is inconſiſtent with the Truth and Goodneſs of God: So in this other Medium of Hiſtory.

That which is in its Circumſtances moſt credible, and in its Matter is ſuppoſed to be neceſſary to Salvation, muſt be certainly true, unleſs God could oblige us to believe a Lye.

Whether God inſpired the Penmen of holy Writ, is matter of Fact; and being ſo, is capable of no other external Evidence, but that of Teſtimony: And matter of Fact, being alſo in Point of Time ſo remote from us, can be judged of only by a Series of Teſtimonies, derived from that Age wherein the Scriptures were written, to this; and the more credible the Teſtifiers, and the more univerſal the Teſtimony, ſo much the more convincing are they to all conſidering Men.

If there be a Revelation pretended to, and I find, upon a ſtrict Examination of it, that it hath all the Marks and Characters of ſuch a Revelation, as our Reaſon tells us Men wanted, and was very proper and becoming God to give, and ſuch a one as Man himſelf could not be the Author of; I muſt be convinced from hence, that it came from God, and ſuch a Revelation as this is the Chriſtian: There we find a very juſt and rational Account of the Nature and Attributes of God, of the original Formation of the World, and particularly, the Creation of Man, the Change and Alteration of his firſt Condition, and the

unhappy Conſequences of it: From thence we are enabled to explain theſe contrary Tendencies and Principles of Action we experience in ourſelves, that unequal Compoſition of Perfection and Weakneſſes, Capacities and Wants we are ſenſible of; the Ignorance of which makes Man the moſt unaccountable Part of the whole Univerſe: There we are acquainted with the moſt proper ſuitable way of worſhipping and ſerving God; there we have the trueſt Draught of Morality, the beſt and moſt exalted Scheme of all the Duties which concern the Government of ourſelves, and our Behaviour to one another; we are aſſured that the Obſervance of religious Duties in ſuch a Manner will be acceptable to God: All our Doubts about the Imperfection of our Obedience are removed, and our Conſciences intirely ſatisfied; a Way there being ſhewed us, how our Piety and Virtue may be rendered well-pleaſing to God, notwithſtanding the many Failings they are accompanied with; the Wiſdom and Kindneſs of which Expedient we cannot but acknowledge and admire. The ſame Revelation does likewiſe fix and aſcertain our Belief of a future State, and propoſes ſuch Rewards and Puniſhments in another World, as are proper and ſufficient Motives to determine us to the Practice of Religion in this; and gives us a ſatisfactory Explication of all the preſent Inequalities of Providence in the Conduct of human Affairs.

If the ſacred Writers had been like other Teachers, they would either have a nobler Way of expreſſing themſelves, having Wit enough to think ſo highly; or elſe they would have but mean Thoughts, having not Wit enough to expreſs themſelves more nobly.

It would be an endleſs Piece of Work, if, to believe, we were obliged to enter into all the long

long Inquiries that the Curiosity of Men, or the Distrust of Unbelievers, does require: 'Tis enough, first to perceive some Characters of Divinity in the Scripture; (which will infallibly happen on the reading only of that wonderful Book, if we be not blinded by our Passions) and secondly, to assure ourselves, that God is too good, to be willing to deceive us by false Revelations; and too wise, to permit that the Revelation should be altered in any thing essential.

An Historian may inform us of the Foundation of some City or State; but to speak of the World in general, one must needs have been assisted by the Revelation and Light of that infinite Being, that existed alone before the Creation of the World, and who alone was able to teach Men at what time he had created the Universe.

In good Reason and Justice, we ought to receive *Moses*'s Chronology, because it must needs be true, if it cannot be convinced of being false: The Reason of that Inference is, that *Moses* hath not given to the Duration of the World a Hundred or Two hundred thousand Years, as he would certainly have done, if he had spoke merely by Guess, that People might lose themselves in that great Antiquity, without being able to contradict him; but quite contrary, some Monument of Twelve hundred, or Two thousand Years at most, had been sufficient to overthrow all that he had said, which Men have not been able to find.

As the Hatred of the *Jews* for the Gospel leaves no room to suspect the Christians of having supposed the Writings of the old Testament; so the Hatred and Animosity of the *Samaritans* against the *Jews* does not allow, that we should in any wise accuse the *Jews* to have falsely boasted

boaſted of the Antiquity of their Laws, and of *Moſes* their Lawgiver.

An Obſervation that ought to be made on the Laws of *Moſes*, is, That ſince the firſt Inſtant they were given to the *Iſraelites*, there hath been no Alteration made in them; which is a ſenſible and convincing Proof of their divine Inſtitution, or, at leaſt, that the People that received them, were fully perſuaded that they were ſo, ſince they always look'd upon them as ſacred and inviolable, notwithſtanding the burdenſome Weight of their Yoke.

Another Obſervation is, That the Laws of *Moſes*, having been long before any other Laws, publiſhed during the Infancy and Rudeneſs of Mankind, ought to have been very imperfect; or if they are more perfect than others, we muſt needs think, that there hath been ſomething more than human in the Lawgiver of the *Jews*.

The Books of holy Scripture, are generally received as written by ſuch and ſuch Perſons; theſe Authors have the Name; theſe have, as it were, the Poſſeſſion of them, and that is Title enough, if no other could be produced, ſo long as no Evidence is offered to ſhew, that any other Perſons have a better Title to them.

It muſt be owned, that we have not ſuch Demonſtration that the Books of the new Teſtament were written by the Apoſtles, as is ſelf-evident, and cannot be contradicted; for the Matter itſelf is not capable of ſuch Demonſtration; but we have ſuch Demonſtration of it, as cannot be contradicted with any Reaſon; we have as good Aſſurance of it, as we have, or can have, of any Matter of that kind; we have as good Evidence of the Truth of it, as (ſuppoſing it to be true) we could have of it, and more than this cannot be deſired: There is no

Argument by which it is, or can be proved, that any ancient Book was written by the Perſon who is ſaid to be the Author of it, which does not prove the Authority of theſe Books rather more ſtrongly, than it does the Authority of any other Book; and there is no Argument that is, or can be urged againſt the Authority of theſe Books, which may not, with as good Reaſon be urged, to diſprove the Authority of any other Books of the like Antiquity.

MEN would be as equitable to the Bible, as they are to other Books, were it not that they more wiſh to have that falſe or irrational, than any other Book; the plain Parts of it, the Precepts and Threatnings, ſpeak clearer than they deſire, gall and fret them; and therefore they will revenge themſelves upon the obſcurer, and ſeem angry that there are ſome things they underſtand not, when indeed their real Diſpleaſure is at thoſe they do.

INFIDELS do not reject the Scripture, becauſe it teacheth too little; but rather, becauſe it teacheth too much; becauſe it teacheth Doctrines above their Reaſon, and commands ſuch Duties as they do not like to practiſe; and if it taught leſs than it does, they would be more ready to own its divine Authority.

HAD not the primitive Chriſtians, who received the Scripture as divine, the ſame Security of not being deceived, as we have in things that are told us by our Contemporaries? Had they not as great Opportunities of examining, and the greateſt Concern of doing it thoroughly, ſince they were to engage not only their future Hopes in another World, but (that which to Nature is much more ſenſible) all their preſent Enjoyments, and even Life itſelf, upon the Truth of it?

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The Backwardneſs of ſome Churches, to receive ſome Books of the New Teſtament at firſt, when they had nothing to object to the Matter of them, makes it evident, that the Chriſtians of the firſt Ages were not ſo very eaſy and credulous, as ſome have repreſented them; and gives very good Ground to believe, that they had, from the Beginning, ſuch Evidence as was without Exception, of the Authority of all the other Books which were never controverted, but with univerſal Conſent received by all Chriſtian Churches.

The more there were of ſpurious and counterfeit Books in the early Times of Chriſtianity, ſo much the more aſſured and confident we may reaſonably be, that none but ſuch as were undoubtedly true and authentick, and very well atteſted, were admitted into the Canon; and of the two, it is much more probable, that they did, for want of clear Atteſtation, refuſe to admit ſome that had been written by the Apoſtles, than that they did, without ſufficient Atteſtation, admit any that were not.

In the New as well as in the Old Teſtament, God himſelf hath made the Canon, and it hath not been done by the Authority of the Church; for the ſame Apoſtles, and the ſame Evangeliſts, who, by their Preaching and Miracles, proved to the Faithful, that they were Men immediately ſent by God, did alſo impart to the Church the Books of the New Teſtament, which contained what they had preached by word of Mouth, to the end thoſe Books ſhould be a perpetual ſtanding Rule of the Chriſtian Faith; the Church hath not properly given them its Approbation, but in admitting them, and looking upon them with that Reſpect due to divine Books.

The four Evangeliſts have left their Writings in populous Cities; they have been read conſtantly every Sunday in the Congregations of Chriſtians, as St. *Juſtin Martyr* witneſſeth in his Apology written about the middle of the ſecond Century: The Apoſtles have writ their Epiſtles to numerous Churches, who knew their Hands, and their Meſſengers; and there is no Writing in the World, hath been kept with ſo much Care: Since the Apoſtles, there have ever been Chriſtians who have been concerned in the reading and preſerving their Writings, looking upon them as Springs of eternal Life; and if any Hereticks (as *Marcion*) have attempted to corrupt the Originals, which were in the Hands of his Sectaries, we find that preſently every body riſeth againſt that Corruption, which ſhews, that it hath not been poſſible to introduce it.

The Books of the holy Scripture cannot be corrupted, ſaith St. *Auſtin*, in the 32d Book againſt *Fauſtus*, c. 16. becauſe they are, and have been, in the Hands of all Chriſtians, and whoſoever ſhould firſt attempt an Alteration, he would be confuted by the Inſpection of other ancienter Copies; beſides, the Scriptures are not in ſome one Language, but tranſlated into many, ſo that the Fault of one Book would be corrected by others more ancient, or in a different Tongue.

To think to have Forgery admitted in the Scriptures, is (as a learned Man ſaith) like attempting to poiſon the Sea.

'Tis very obſervable, that the *Jews* have been faithful not to corrupt thoſe Paſſages which are uſeful to Chriſtians, and render them infamous throughout the World, by eſtabliſhing the Vocation of him, whom their Fathers have crucified.

It were but a reaſonable Propoſal, that no Man ſhould arraign the Scriptures, till they have

uſed all honeſt Diligence, taken in all probable Helps for the underſtanding it; but one may appeal to the generality of thoſe, who have raiſed the loudeſt Clamours againſt the Scripture, whether they have endeavoured to render themſelves competent Judges of it, by inquiring into the Originals, or informing themſelves of thoſe local Cuſtoms, peculiar Idioms, and many other Circumſtances, by which obſcure Texts are to be cleared: I do not affirm it neceſſary to Salvation, that every Man ſhould do this; yet, I affirm it neceſſary to him, that will pretend to judge of the Bible; and he, that without this, condemns it, does it as manifeſt Injury, as a Judge, that ſhould paſs Sentence upon the Indictment, without hearing the Defence.

Would Men uſe due Diligence, no doubt, many of the ſeeming Contradictions in Scripture would be reconciled, and the Obſcurities cleared; and if any ſhould after all remain, they might find twenty things fitter to charge it on, than want of Verity, or Perſpicuity, in the inſpired Writers. Alas! what human Writing is there of near that Antiquity, wherein there are not many Paſſages unintelligible? And, indeed, unleſs modern Times knew all thoſe national Cuſtoms, obſolete Laws, particular Rites and Ceremonies, Phraſes and proverbial Sayings, to which ſuch ancient Books refer, 'tis impoſſible, but ſome Paſſages muſt ſtill remain obſcure.

He that would have his Doubts ſolved concerning Scripture, let him follow the Method our bleſſed Lord hath deſcribed; let him do the Will of God, and then he ſhall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, *John* vii, 17. Let him bring with him a Probity of Mind, a Willingneſs to aſſent to all Convictions he ſhall there meet with, and then he will find Grounds

ſufficient to aſſure him, that it is God's Word; and conſequently, to be received with all the Submiſſion and Reverence that its being ſo exacts.

A Man poſſeſſeth an Eſtate, which was bought by his Great Grandfather, or perhaps Elder Progenitor; he charily preſerveth that Deed of Purchaſe, and never looks for farther Security of his Title; yet at the Rate that Men object againſt the Bible, what numberleſs Cavils might be raiſed againſt ſuch a Deed? How ſhall it be known, that there was ever ſuch a Man as either Seller or Purchaſer? If by Witneſſes, they are as liable to Doubt as the other, it being as eaſy to forge the Atteſtation, as the main Writing; and yet notwithſtanding all theſe poſſible Deceits, nothing but a poſitive Proof of Forgery can invalidate this Deed: Let but the Scripture have the ſame Meaſure, be allowed to ſtand in Force, to be what it pretends to be, till the contrary be (not by Surmiſes and poſſible Conjectures, but) by evident Proof evinced, and its greateſt Advocates will ask no more.

Does any Man doubt, whether there be ſuch a thing as Light and Heat, as Day and Night, tho' he cannot be ſatisfied, whether the Sun or the Earth move? And do Men doubt, whether they can ſee or not, till they can demonſtrate how Viſion is made; and muſt none be allowed to ſee but Mathematicians? Or do Men refuſe to eat, till they are ſatisfied how, and after what Manner they are nouriſhed? So ſhall we refuſe to believe the Scriptures which come confirmed down to us by all the Ways of Confirmation, that the Authority of any Revelation, at this Diſtance of Time, could be expected to have, if it really were what we believe the Scriptures to be; becauſe there are ſeveral things to be found in the Scriptures, which ſome think would not be

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in them, if they were of divine Revelation? It is not inconſiſtent, that that may be moſt true, which may have many Exceptions framed againſt it; but it is abſurd to reject that as incredible, which comes recommended to our Belief by ſuch Evidence as cannot be diſproved; Difficulties can never alter the Nature of Things, and make that which is true to become falſe; there is no Science without its Difficulties, and it is not pretended that Theology is without them.

All the Objections that can be invented againſt the Scriptures, cannot ſeem near ſo abſurd to a conſidering Man, as to ſuppoſe that God ſhould not at all reveal himſelf to Mankind; or that the Heathen Oracles, or *Mahomet*'s Alcoran, ſhould be of divine Revelation.

It is Madneſs to reject our own Happineſs, and make ourſelves miſerable, becauſe we do not perceive the Reaſons of all the Means and Methods which God hath been pleaſed to uſe to make us happy, or are not able to underſtand every Word of that Book which contains the Terms of our Salvation. This is as if a Son ſhould chuſe to live miſerably, rather than to enjoy a large Eſtate left him by his Father, becauſe he does not perceive the Deſign and full Meaning of every Particular in his Will, he ſearches out for all Ways and Arts for cavilling at it, and is fond of any Pretence to caſt it aſide as Counterfeit, being reſolved never to believe it to be his Father's.

There is great Reaſon why the Faults and Miſcarriages of the beſt Men ſhould be delivered down to us in the Scriptures, for our Caution and Prevention, as well as upon other Accounts; we are to conform our Actions, not to the Example of Men, but to the Law of God; therefore it could not be neceſſary in the relating of

every evil Action to ſet a Mark of Infamy upon it, and a Caution againſt the Imitation of it.

The Scripture Promiſes are ſo divine and excellent, that they could as little have been made, as they can be performed by any but an Holy and Almighty Author.

All the Cavils that are made againſt the Stile of the Scripture, proceed from Ignorance of Antiquity, and from Raſhneſs of judging of ancient Times, and foreign Countries, by our own; whoever would either delight or profit, muſt ſpeak and act in ſome meaſure according to the Genius of the People with whom he converſes; and if we will but read the Scriptures with the ſame Candor and Reſpect with which we read the Writings of human Authors, and conſider the Times and Perſons, and the Occaſions upon which they were written, there is nothing that can ſeem harſh or improper either in the Words or Actions of the Perſons inſpired, (for it was the Manner of thoſe Countries to ſpeak by their Actions, almoſt as much as in Words) if we will but obſerve the Circumſtances in which the ſeveral Parts of the Scriptures were written, we ſhall find Cauſe to admire the Simplicity, and Plainneſs, and Modeſty of the Stile of the Scriptures.

All the many minute Objections that are made to Scripture, cannot receive their proper Solutions without a thorough Inſight into the whole Compaſs of human Knowledge; which no Man or Generation of Men is capable of, and without ſuch a Penetration into the Ways and Deſigns of God, as is not attainable but by Revelation.

The ridiculous and improbable Stories, abſurd Laws and Injunctions, impertinent Reaſons and Arguments, low and unartful Expreſſions, objected by ſome againſt Scripture; are all eaſily

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and juſtly accountable for from our Ignorance of the Language, in which the Scriptures, and eſpecially thoſe of the Old Teſtament, were writ, ancient Cuſtoms and Uſages in ſpeaking and acting; and the Temper and Circumſtances of the People, where the Things were ſaid and done.

When I am certainly convinced 'tis God that ſpeaks by infallible Signs, and a great Part of the Diſcourſe appears to me worthy of God; I cannot doubt but all the reſt muſt proceed from God, and be worthy of him, tho' it would not appear ſo without this Support.

The ſacred Writers have ſpoken the Language of the People, not that of Philoſophers; they intended to ſanctify Men, not to explain the Myſteries of Nature; wherefore it was neceſſary, they ſhould conform themſelves to the Ideas of the Vulgar; nay it hath pleaſed the *Holy Ghoſt*, that they ſhould have no other, that his Myſteries being cloathed with thoſe popular Ideas, might be fitted to every one's Capacity by the Manner of their Revelation, ſince they could not be ſo by themſelves; the divine Wiſdom uſeth that Way, when the Wonders of the Goſpel Oeconomy are to be repreſented to the *Iſraelites* of old; it employs Expreſſions borrowed from common Practices; it ſays that all Nations ſhall come to *Mount Sion*; that there will be an Altar ſet up in the midſt of *Egypt*, that Sacrifices of Proſperity will be offered every-where, that the Pavilion of God's Glory, or his Tabernacle, ſhall be tranſported among the Nations; how comes it to paſs, that the Prophets foretel in thoſe Terms the Vocation of the Heathen? 'Tis becauſe theſe were the Notions of the common People, that it was requiſite to uſe Expreſſions known, and that the Revelation would become

come unintelligible, without that Condeſcenſion of God, who fits himſelf to every Body's Capacity, without any Exception.

The Wiſdom of God is to be admired, not only for his fitting himſelf to every one's Ideas, that he may be underſtood; but for his taking Care at the ſame Time, that People may not be deceived by taking too literally that vulgar way of Speech.

The Narration in all the hiſtorical Parts of the New Teſtament is very ſhort, naked and ſimple, nothing but bare Matters of Fact being related juſt as they happened without any Interpoſition of the Author; there is no Preparation of Events, no artful Tranſitions or Connections, no ſet Characters of Perſons to be introduced, or Reflections upon paſt Actions, and the Authors of them; no Excuſes or Apologies for ſuch Things as a Writer might probably foreſee would ſhock or diſturb his Readers; no Colours, Artifices or Arguments to ſet off a doubtful Action, and reconcile it to ſome other, or to the Character of the Perſon that did it; the Faults and Infirmities of thoſe Perſons the Authors would ſeem to recommend, are fairly recorded without any Mitigation or Abatement, and the Crimes of their Enemies barely told without any Aggravation.

That is one particular Excellency of the Style of Scripture above all other Books, that the conſtant Phraſe of the ſacred Dialect is to attribute all Events (excepting Sin only) to God.

It is very uſual in Scripture, to expreſs Religion, and the whole Duty of Man, by ſome eminent Act, or Principle, or Part of Religion; ſometimes by the Knowledge of God, and by Faith in him, very frequently by the Fear and

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by the Love of God; and ſo likewiſe, tho' not ſo frequently, by the Remembrance of God.

While the Soul is cloathed with Fleſh, Fancy hath ſuch a Dominion, that we conceive of nothing but by Compariſon, and Images taken from material Things; therefore the Enjoyment of the divine Preſence in Heaven is deſcribed to us in the Scripture by ſenſible Repreſentations, as by a Marriage Feaſt, by ſitting on Thrones, *&c.*

Moral and proverbial Speeches are not to be taken too ſtrictly, as if they were univerſally true, and in all Caſes; it is ſufficient, if they be true for the moſt part, and in ſeveral reſpects, which are very conſiderable, and of this Nature are moſt of the Proverbs of *Solomon.*

The Uſe of metaphorical and figurative Expreſſions, is common in all Languages, and no Language is ſufficient to ſet forth the Majeſty and Attributes of God; but the peculiar Nature and Genius of the *Hebrew* Tongue, inclined and conſtrained the Writers in that Language, to expreſs themſelves in this Manner, *Geneſ.* ix. 5. *At the Hand of every Beaſt will I require it. Joſ.* xxiv. 27. *Behold this Stone ſhall be a Witneſs unto us, for it hath heard all the Words of the Lord.*

The want of diſtinguiſhing the Perſons ſpeaking, hath been a great Cauſe of miſunderſtanding the Scripture, as *Juſtin Martyr* and *Origen* obſerve.

When the Scriptures make mention of God's Eyes and Hands, and Feet, it is to expreſs the Effects of thoſe Actions, which are performed by Men with theſe Members; and when it is ſaid, *Geneſ.* vi. 6. *It repented the Lord he had made Man on Earth, and it grieved him at his Heart*; this was well underſtood to mean no more than that God acted as Men are wont to do, when they change

change their Minds, and repent and grieve at what they have done.

According to the *Hebrew* Phraſe and Manner of Speaking, there are ſeveral Paſſages in the New Teſtament expreſt abſolutely, which are to be underſtood only comparatively.

Parables are a Sort of an Oratory Fiction, which under borrowed Images, teacheth Things of Moment; and as that Way was much in Uſe amongſt the eaſtern Nations, *Jeſus Chriſt* was willing to uſe it, the better to fix the Attention of his Hearers, and explain his Myſteries.

Maimonides lays this down as a fundamental Rule of the Explication of the Scripture, that we ſhould attend to the main Scope and Deſign of Parables, and not inſiſt upon every Word and Circumſtance, which is added to make them more natural, but not as any neceſſary Part of them; and in thoſe Ages, when Prophecies were ſo frequent, and Types and Allegories were ſo conſtantly made uſe of, they had certain Rules and Methods of Interpretation, as we learn from *Joſephus Bell. Judaic. lib.* iii. *c.* 14. which thro' Length of Time, and the Corruptions of ſucceeding Ages, are now loſt; and it is certain, that the *Jews*, in the Time of our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, were often confuſed and ſilenced by them, with the Application of Types and Prophecies, which were then acknowledged to belong to the *Meſſiah*, and were ever ſo underſtood by the *Jews*; but would ſcarce be underſtood ſo by us, if we do not find them thus interpreted and applied.

It is a known *Hebraiſm* to expreſs Things in an imperative and active Form, which are to be underſtood only permiſſively: So, when our Saviour ſaith to *Judas*, *What thou doſt, do quickly*; we are not to underſtand, that he commanded him to betray

betray him, tho' that ſeem to be expreſt in the Form; ſo likewiſe in other Places of Scripture.

The Word *Impoſſible* in Scripture, is ſometimes uſed for extremely difficult, as when our Saviour ſaith, *It is impoſſible for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

In the Interpretation of ſome difficult and obſcure Paſſages, every Man ought to govern himſelf by what is clear and plain, and agreeable to the main Scope and Tenour of the Bible, and to thoſe natural Notions which Men have of God, and of his Perfections.

The true Way to come to a right Underſtanding of the Scripture, is to know the Scope and Deſign, and never to go from it; Reaſon and Piety, together with the Study of Languages, Hiſtory and Antiquity, afford a conſiderable Help; a Commentator ought, as it were, to tranſport himſelf into thoſe Places and Times the ſacred Writers did live in; he ought to ſuppoſe himſelf in their Caſe, to fancy what a Deſign they had in Speaking or Writing, what Perſons they had to deal with, what Notions, what Knowledge, what Cuſtoms People of that Time had; another Rule of a good Commentator is, to ſet forth with Plainneſs and Simplicity, the literal Senſe of Scripture; and not to fly to the myſtical Senſe, but in thoſe Places, in which the Spirit of God hath declared it ought to be ſought for.

The Holy Scripture ought to be explained after a plain and popular Way; 'tis what muſt be owned, if we conſider that it was given for the Inſtruction and Salvation of all Men, and that our Saviour's Diſcourſes, and thoſe of his Apoſtles were directed to the Vulgar, and People that were nothing leſs than Philoſophers.

The true Senſe of the Revelation of our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, contained in Scripture,

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is not to be taken from the Authority or Teſtimony of any Men whatever, but from thoſe Arguments called by the Schoolmen artificial; that is, from the Conſideration of the Things themſelves in Queſtion; from the Compariſon of ſeveral Paſſages alike, from the Analogy which ought to be between the ſeveral Parts of Scripture; from the Context; from the other Places of Scripture, treating of the ſame Subject; from that perfect Agreement which ought to be between the Light of Revelation, and that of right Reaſon; from the Agreement alſo, which ought to be between the Revelation and the Light of our Senſes, and ſuch-like.

If every private Man hath the Right, is under an Obligation, and hath Underſtanding enough, to ſolve the great Difficulty of the Infallibility of the Church, why ſhould he not do the ſame in reſpect of all other Points of Doctrine?

'Tis a great Fault to apply Paſſages of Scripture to all ſorts of Perſons without Diſtinction; and 'tis a greater ſtill, that when they are capable of a double Senſe, the looſeſt ſhould be pitcht upon.

When we quote the Scripture, we ought neither to add, nor diminiſh any Thing from it, neither alter the Words, nor ſeparate Sentences from what precedes, and immediately follows; elſe there will be neither Abſurdity nor Impiety, but what may be maintained by the Word of God; this Saying, *The moſt righteous Man ſinneth ſeven times a Day*, is no-where to be found in the Bible; theſe are *Solomon*'s Words, *A juſt Man falleth ſeven times, and riſeth up again; but the Wicked ſhall fall into Miſchief.* *Solomon* ſpeaks of the frequent Afflictions of good Men, and in particular of their Sufferings from bad Men, out of which God delivers them.

It is likewiſe a Miſtake to make St. *Paul* ſay, that he was the greateſt of Sinners; he does not ſay ſo; he ſaith only, that he was the firſt among the Sinners, whom *Jeſus Chriſt* hath ſaved; his Meaning is, That he holds as it were the firſt Place among converted Sinners, that he is a notable Example of God's Mercy, and that our Saviour had begun by him to ſhew his Grace and Goodneſs: A good Man is not bound to believe himſelf worſe than the greateſt Sinners; quite contrary, he ought to bleſs God of that Good his Grace hath put in him.

As it is manifeſt, that when St. *Paul*, in the ixth ver. ch. 7. to the *Romans*, ſaith, *I was without Law*, he ſpeaks of the State of the Man, to whom the Law hath not been given; ſo it is without Diſpute, that when he ſaith, *I am carnal*, &c. he deſcribes the State of a corrupted Man, living under the Law, and not his own: There are ſeveral Inſtances to be found in Scripture of that way of ſpeaking, by which, he that ſpeaks, ſets himſelf in the Room of thoſe he ſpeaks off.

The fundamental Doctrines of Religion are ſo diſperſed throughout the Scriptures, that they could receive no Damage or Alteration, unleſs the whole Scriptures ſhould have been changed; wherefore not only the moſt learned Proteſtants, but *Bellarmin* himſelf, and the beſt Criticks amongſt the Papiſts, have acknowledged, that all Things relating to Articles of Faith, and Rules of Life, are delivered intire and uncorrupted in the Scriptures, notwithſtanding the various Lections.

Should we reject all controverted Books and Paſſages whatſoever, and ſhould we eſtabliſh any Reading we pleaſe, where there is Variety, only letting the authentick undoubted Places be the Rule of Expoſition to the doubtful (than which nothing can be more reaſonable); in this Caſe, I

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dare affirm, That not one Article of Faith, or Rule of Practice, or any of the principal Facts our Religion is built upon, would be cut off; but might be as evidently proved, from what remains uncontested, as from the Whole; ſo that it is hardly in any Place, of which there are various Readings, very material, which is the true Reading.

If we find various Readings in ſome Copies of the Bible, without Doubt, the true and natural is that which agrees with the ancient Copies, and the other Paſſages of Scripture, where the ſame Thing is ſpoken of; with the Writings and Commentaries of the Ancients, which is proved by the old Tranſlations; and chiefly which agrees beſt with the Expoſition of the Place, which gives the moſt commodious Senſe, and the moſt agreeable to what precedes, and to what follows.

It is very ſtrange, that any Community of Chriſtians ſhould think that a proper Way to extinguiſh Hereſy, which the Heathen Perſecutors made uſe of to extinguiſh Chriſtianity; that is, by taking the Bible from the People's Hands.

If Men fall into Hereſy by reading the Scripture, the Fault does not lie in the Scripture; but in thoſe Men's Pride, and vain Glory, or Covetouſneſs, or Senſuality: Is it then reaſonable, that all ſhould be deprived of it, becauſe ſome ill Men have made an ill Uſe of it? Some Men have ſurfeited by eating and drinking; is it reaſonable therefore, that all Mankind ſhould be deprived of Meat and Drink?

We muſt not hinder Men from being Chriſtians, to preſerve them from being Hereticks; and put out Mens Eyes, for fear they ſhould ſome time or other take upon them to diſpute their Way with their Guides. Indeed, there is nothing in the Chriſtian

Christian Religion, but what is fit for every Man to know, because there is nothing in it, but what is designed to promote Holiness, and a good Life.

There are no considerable Objections can be made against the People's reading of the Scriptures, which would not have held as well against the writing and publishing of them at first in a Language understood by the People.

Suppose the reading of the Scriptures hath been the Occasion of Heresies; were there ever more than in the first Ages of Christianity? And yet neither the Apostles, nor their Successors, ever prescribed this Remedy; but are those that forbid it in earnest? must not Men know the Truth for fear of falling into Error? Because Men may possibly miss their Way in Noon-day, must they never travel but in the Night, when they are sure to lose it?

Let Mankind judge whether any thing be more unreasonable, than to tell Men in effect, that it is fit they should understand as little of Religion as is possible; that God hath published a very dangerous Book, with which it is not safe for the People to be familiarly acquainted; that our blessed Saviour, and his Apostles, and the ancient Christian Church, for more than 600 Years, were not wise Managers of Religion, but like fond and foolish Fathers, put a Knife and a Sword in the Hands of their Children.

The Bishops met at *Bononia*, to consult about the Establishment of the *Roman* See, in their Counsel given to Pope *Julius* the Third, give this as the greatest and weightiest of all; That by all means as little of the Gospel as might be, especially in the vulgar Tongue, should be read to the People, &c. And speaking of the Scripture, they give this remarkable Testimony and Com-

mendation of it; "This, in ſhort, is that Book, "which, above all others, hath raiſed thoſe "Tempeſts and Whirlwinds, which we were al-"moſt carried away with; and, in Truth, if any "one diligently conſiders it, and compares it with "what is done in our Church, he will find them "very contrary to each other, and our Doctrine "not only to be very different from it, but re-"pugnant to it." If this be the Caſe, can we blame them for being againſt the Scriptures, when the Scriptures are acknowledged to be ſo clearly againſt them? But ſurely nobody that conſidereth theſe things, would be of that Church, which is brought, by the undeniable Evidence of the things themſelves, to this ſhameful Confeſſion, that ſeveral of their Doctrines and Practices, are very contrary to the Word of God.

For us not to read what God hath written and directed to us, is, by Implication of Fact, a prophane Neglect and Contempt of his Mercy, and looks as if we either thought him ſuch an inſignificant Being, or ourſelves ſo little concerned in any thing that he can ſay or write to us, as that it would not be worth our while to receive and peruſe the Contents of thoſe ſacred Epiſtles, which, by the Hands of his holy Penmen, he hath vouchſafed to direct us.

The proper End for which the holy Scriptures were deſigned, is the knowing God's Will, in order to the practiſing it; and he that covets to know God's Will for any Purpoſe but to practiſe it, is only ſtudious to entitle himſelf to the greater Number of Stripes.

There is no Book in the World more plain, and better fitted to teach a Man any Art or Science, than the Bible is to direct and inſtruct Men in the Way to Heaven, and in all things neceſſary to Faith, and a good Life; not that every Man,

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at first hearing or reading of these things in it, may perfectly understand them; but by diligent Reading and Consideration, if he be of good Apprehension and Capacity, he may come to a sufficient Knowledge of them; and if he be of a meaner Capacity, and be willing to learn, he may, by the Help of such Teachers as God hath appointed in his Church for this very Purpose, be brought to understand them without any great Pains.

If the Scriptures were not as well a plain, as an infallible and perfect Rule, they would be of no more Use to direct our Faith and Practice, than a Sun-Dial, tho' it be never so exactly made, should be in a dark Room, to tell us the Hour of the Day.

If it were a capital Crime to convert any of the Perfume of the Sanctuary to common Use, *Exod.* xxx. 38. can we think, that God can be pleased to see his more sacred Word echoed to him in prophane Drollery? Would any but an Idiot, waste that sovereign Liquor in the washing of his Feet, which was given him to expel Poison from his Heart? And are not we guilty of the like Folly, when we apply God's Word to serve only a ludicrous Humour, and make ourselves merry with that which was designed for the most serious and most important Purpose, the Salvation of our Souls?

Since the Scripture was written to teach and instruct Men, to be sure it teacheth them most plainly, that which is most necessary for them to know; and therefore, since there are some things plainly taught in Scripture, as is evident to any one that reads it, to be sure, among these things is contained, all that is necessary for Men to know and understand.

Every wiſe Agent purſues his End by the moſt proper and effectual Means; and I would fain know, whether to write plainly or obſcurely, be the moſt proper Means to inſtruct Men by writing: If to write plainly, then either the Apoſtles wrote ſo, or they were not wiſe Agents, ſince to inſtruct was the great End of their writing.

To ſay that God would not write thoſe things plainly, which he thought neceſſary for all Men to know, and which he wrote on purpoſe that all Men might know; is to ſay, that he would, and would not, at the ſame time; or, that he wrote them on purpoſe that Men might know them, and yet that he wrote ſo as that they might not know them.

The Scripture is clear enough of itſelf, and is its own beſt Interpreter; and the leſs Men vary from the Terms of Scripture, the more intelligible they are like to render it, and the Things contained in it; whilſt, on the other hand, if Men affect new Terms, and ſuch as are unſcriptural, they often obſcure and render the plaineſt Truths in Scripture unintelligible.

'Tis ſcarce poſſible for a Man, who hath a due Reſpect for the Scriptures, and makes them the only Rule of his Faith and Manners, and is heartily concerned for his eternal State, to fall into any deadly Error; for the things neceſſary, are not only clearly expreſſed in Scripture, but are to be met with frequently, and in many Paſſages; ſo that, if they are delivered more obſcurely in one Place, they are propounded more clearly in another.

If Men will but allow, that God is juſt, that he is not a hard Maſter, expecting to reap where he hath not ſown, I think they muſt allow, that all things neceſſary to our Salvation, not know-

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able by Reaſon, are taught in the Books of holy Scripture which we now have; becauſe there are no other Books extant, which we have Reaſon to receive and accept as divine Revelation.

Amongst all the Books, there is none to be compared with the Scripture; that ſacred Book, being read with a deep Veneration, and with a ſincere Deſire to find in it the Nouriſhment of the Soul, and to make ſome Progreſs in Piety, is, of all the external Means which God employs to kindle the Fire of his Love in our Hearts, the moſt efficacious, and moſt powerful.

When we read other Books, we go to the Streams; but when we read the Scripture, we draw out of the Spring: human Books have their Imperfections, and therefore ought to be read with Diſcretion; but that divine Book is moſt perfect, is a Guide, whoſe Direction we may intirely rely on without Fear or Peril: Since it is ſo, is it not very ſtrange, that the beſt Reading ſhould be the moſt neglected?

CHAP. VIII.

Againſt Oral Tradition.

It is very ſtrange, if there had been any other Word of God beſides what is written, there ſhould be no Notice taken of it in that which is written; eſpecially conſidering, that if it be as neceſſary to be believed as the *Roman* Church defines it, it is as neceſſary that we ſhould have Direction where to find it, and how

to know it, when we have it; but of this we have not the leaſt Intimation in Scripture: And after all, if it be proved, as it is, that the holy Scriptures are a ſufficient Rule of Faith and Manners to conduct us to eternal Life, this will be enough to evacuate all that is pretended for this unwritten Word of God; for God and Nature, we know, do nothing in vain; and therefore, if one Word of God be ſufficient, *viz.* that which is written, what Need have we of this other, which is unwritten?

If it be objected, that whilſt we diſparage Tradition, we do virtually invalidate the Scripture itſelf, which comes to us upon its Credit; it may be anſwered, 1*ſt*. That ſince God hath withdrawn immediate Revelation from the World, Tradition is the only Means to convey to us the firſt Notice, that this Book is the Word of God; and it being the only Means he affords, we have all Reaſon to depend on his Goodneſs, that he will not ſuffer that to be evacuated to us; and that, how liable ſoever Tradition may be to err, yet it ſhall not actually err in this particular: But in the ſecond Place, this Tradition ſeems not ſo liable to Falſification as others; it is ſo very ſhort and ſimple a Propoſition, Such and ſuch Writings are the Word of God, that there is no great room for Sophiſtry or Miſtake to pervert the Senſe; the only poſſible Deception muſt be to change the Subject, and obtrude ſuppoſititious Writings, in room of the true, under the Title of the Word of God: But this is unpracticable, becauſe of the Multitudes of Copies which were diſperſed in the World, by which ſuch an Attempt would ſoon have been detected: There appears therefore more Reaſon, as well as Neceſſity, to rely upon Tradition in this, than in moſt other Particulars; neither is Oral Tra-

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dition ſo far to be decried, as to conclude it impoſſible it ſhould derive any Truth to Poſterity; 'tis only to be looked on as more caſual, and conſequently, a leſs fit Conveyance of the moſt important and neceſſary Verities, than the written Word, which is juſtified by the common Senſe of Mankind, who uſe to commit thoſe things to writing, which they are moſt ſolicitous to derive to Poſterity; as Nations their fundamental Laws, Men their Purchaſes of an Eſtate, and their important Pacts and Bargains.

Whatever Uncertainty there may be in the Senſe of any Texts of Scripture, Oral Tradition is ſo far from affording us any Help in this Caſe, that it is a thouſand times more uncertain, and leſs to be truſted to; eſpecially, if we may take that to be the traditionary Senſe of Scripture, which we meet with in the Decretals of Popes, and the Acts of ſome of their Councils, than which never was any thing in the whole World more abſurd and ridiculous; and whence may we expect to have the infallible traditional Senſe of Scripture, if not from the Heads and Repreſentatives of their Church?

All Points of Faith in Difference betwixt the Proteſtants and the Church of *Rome*, are mere Innovations, and plain Additions to the ancient Chriſtian Faith; but all that we believe is acknowledged by them, to be undoubtedly the ancient Chriſtian Faith.

Men have ever been apt to impoſe upon themſelves, and to pleaſe themſelves with a Conceit of pleaſing God full as well, or better, by ſome other way, than that which he hath preſcribed and appointed for them: But we ought to conſider, that he is a great King, and will be obeyed and obſerved by his Creatures in his own Way, and make them happy upon his own

Terms, and likewiſe, that he is infinitely wiſe and good; and therefore, that the Laws which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain Means of our Happineſs, than any Inventions and Devices of our own.

CHAP. IX.

Concerning the Truth of the Matters of Fact contained both in the Old and New Teſtament.

WHERE the following Rules all meet, Matters of Fact cannot be falſe, *1ſt.* If the Matter of Fact be ſuch, as that Mens outward Senſes, their Eyes and Ears, may be Judges of it. *2dly*, If it be done publickly in the Face of the World. *3dly*, That not only publick Monuments be kept up in Memory of it, but ſome outward Actions to be performed. *4thly*, That ſuch Monuments, and ſuch Actions, or Obſervances, be inſtituted, and do commence from the Time that the Matter of Fact was done: One may challenge all the Deiſts in the World to ſhew any Action that is fabulous, which hath all theſe four Rules and Marks.

WHENEVER it can be ſuppoſed, that the Books of *Moſes* were forged in ſome Age after *Moſes*, it is impoſſible they could have been received as true, unleſs the Forgers could have made the whole Nation believe, that they had received theſe Books from their Fathers, had been inſtructed in them when they were Children; that they

they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their Children in pursuance to what was commanded in these Books; that they had observed the yearly Passover, the weekly Sabbaths, the new Moons, and all the several Feasts and Ceremonies commanded in these Books, &c. I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole Nation of Men, that they had known and practised all these Things, if they had not done it? So that these are the third and fourth Marks abovementioned.

It is impossible the Histories of *Exodus* and the Gospel, could ever have been received, if they had not been true; because the Institution of the Priesthood of *Levi* and Christ, of the Sabbath, the Passover, the Circumcision, of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, &c. are there related as descending all the Way down from those Times without Interruption, and the Truth of the Matters of Fact of *Exodus*, and the Gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon Men, than as they have practised such publick Institutions; it is appealing to the Sense of Mankind for the Truth of them, and makes it impossible for any to have invented such Stories in After-ages, without a palpable Detection of the Cheat when first invented, as impossible, as to have imposed upon the Senses of Mankind, at the same time when such publick Matters of Fact were said to be done.

If it should be questioned, whether there ever was such a Man as *Moses* who gave the *Jews* their Law, how absurd is it to imagine, that a new and burthensome Law, which at first was so very uneasy to them, and which nothing but a full Persuasion of its divine Authority could ever have made them so zealous for, should be received by any Nation merely upon a feigned and groundless

groundless Report, that *Moses* had at some time or other, delivered it in such a Manner, and in such Circumstances, if there had been never such a Man, or such a Lawgiver, in the World?

No People can be supposed to consent to the making Laws, by which they are forbidden to sow their Land every seventh Year, and are commanded to leave their Habitations, and go up to the capital City from every Part of their Country thrice in a Year; no People could agree to enact such Laws of their own Contrivance, because none could subsist in the Observation of them without a Miracle, when they had enraged all the neighbouring Nations to their Destruction.

From the Books of *Josephus* against *Appion* it appears, That what the most ancient Authors of other Nations, and the latter Heathen, as *Strabo Tacitus*, *Justin* and others, have written concerning the *Jews*, agrees with their own Account in the great and fundamental Points as to the Matters of Fact, the only Dispute being concerning the Manner in which they were brought about, and the Means whereby all was effected; but were it not an extreme Partiality to follow such Authors, rather than credit the *Jewish* Records, attested and delivered down to us by the unanimous Approbation and Testimony of the whole Nation?

If the *Jews* had made any Alterations in the Books of *Moses*, it would have been to strike out those numerous Passages which are so reproachful to their Nation, and to have changed those Ceremonies that were so burthensom, and so singular; but when so refractory a People become so zealous for such a Law, so uneasy at first, and so distasteful to them, it is an undeniable Argument, that they had the greatest Assurance of its divine

divine Original, and that they would neither falsify it themselves, nor suffer others to falsify it.

The Unbelievers demand for Matters of Fact long since past, a Demonstration from the outward Senses of the present Age; that is, that I should see or hear what was before I was born, which is a Method they would hoot at, if proposed in any other Case.

It lieth upon the Deists, if they would appear as Men of Reason, to shew some Matter of Fact of former Ages, which they allow to be true, that hath greater Evidences of its Truth, than the Matters of Fact of *Moses*, and of *Christ*: Otherwise, they cannot with any Shew of Reason, reject the one, and yet admit of the other.

He that would take Theorems in Mathematicks, upon the mere Authority of a Relator, when he might have, and ought to demand a Demonstration for them; is not more foolishly irregular, than he that demands Demonstrations in Matters of Fact and History.

If we consider why we believe any Matters of Fact, which never fell within our own particular and immediate Cognizance, as the Story of *Julius Cæsar*, and *William* the Conqueror; that there is such a Place as *Italy*, as *China*; we shall find the Reason to be, because a great many Men have acquainted us, that there were formerly such Persons, who did such and such Things; and that there are now such Places in the World, which Men, who were competent Judges of what they tell us, had sufficient Opportunities of knowing the Truth themselves, no Motives conceivable that could dispose them to lye to others, and are contradicted by nobody of equal Authority with them; but we have all these Reasons to believe the Matters of Fact related in the New Testament,

Teſtament, in the fulleſt Force and Extent of them, and ſeveral other beſides, as the Incapacity of the Witneſſes to deceive, if they had been diſpoſed to do it, the greater Motives they had not to ſay what they did, than to ſay it, if it had been falſe; and the greater Motives other Perſons had to contradict them, if they could have been diſproved.

The Nature of thoſe Facts Chriſtianity is built upon is ſuch, that 'tis impoſſible for any body to believe them at any Diſtance from the Time in which they are affirmed to happen, if they were firſt invented, when he is required to believe them: Would not theſe have been every Man's Queſtions? Why was not the Religion now offered to us embraced, when it was firſt preſcribed to Mankind, with all thoſe Evidences of its divine Original we are told of? Why were not thoſe ſtrange Facts believed by thoſe that were the immediate Witneſſes of them? If they were, and if the Chriſtian Religion ſpread and increaſed upon the Credit of them, (as is affirmed, and, if the Miracles were true, muſt needs be allowed) how came it to paſs, that neither we nor our Forefathers ever heard of thoſe Things, and that we have no Hiſtory or Monument of them remaining?

The Matters of Fact of Chriſt being preſſed to be true, no otherwiſe, than as there were at that Time, (whenever the Deiſts will ſuppoſe the Goſpel to be forged) not only publick Sacraments of Chriſt's Inſtitution, but an Order of Clergy likewiſe of his Appointment to adminiſter them; and it being impoſſible there could be any ſuch Things before they were invented, it is as impoſſible that they ſhould be received when invented; and therefore, it was as impoſſible to have impoſed upon Mankind in this Matter, by

inventing

inventing of it in After-ages, as at the Time when thoſe Things were ſaid to be done.

We have as great Aſſurance, that our Saviour was alive again after his Crucifixion, as that he ever lived at all; and we have at leaſt all the Aſſurance that there was ſuch a Perſon as Chriſt, that we can have, that there once lived any other Man at that Diſtance of Time from us; we can no more doubt, that our Saviour was born in the Reign of *Auguſtus Cæſar*, and was crucified under *Tiberius*, than that there were once ſuch Emperors in the World; nay, we have it much better atteſted, that Chriſt was born, and was crucified, and roſe again, than that there ever were ſuch Princes as theſe two Emperors; for no Man made it ever his Buſineſs to go about the World to certify this, and to teſtify the Truth of it at his Death; but the Apoſtles themſelves, and their Diſciples and Converts, and innumerable others ever ſince the Beginning of Chriſtianity, have aſſerted the Particulars of the Life, and Death, and Reſurrection of our Saviour, under all Dangers, and Torments, and Deaths; ſo that a Man may as well doubt of any Matter of Fact that ever was done before his own Time, or at a great Diſtance from him, as doubt of theſe Fundamentals of the Chriſtian Religion; and in ſome Reſpects we ſeem to have more Evidence, than theſe could have that lived in the Beginning of Chriſtianity; for they could ſee but ſome Miracles, we have the Benefit of all; they relied upon their own Senſes, and upon the Senſes of ſuch as they knew and converſed with; we, upon the Senſes of innumerable People, who ſucceſſively beheld them for the Space of divers hundred Years together: we have, beſides, one ſort of Evidence, which thoſe that lived at the firſt planting of Chriſtianity could not have; for we

ſee many of thoſe Prophecies fulfilled, which our Saviour foretold concerning his Church.

The Matters recorded by the Evangelical Writers, are ſuch as might be certainly known; and they are related in ſuch a Manner, that if the Hiſtory of them had been falſe, it could never have gained Credit in the World; if the Falſity of only one ſingle Relation had been made appear, the Credit of the whole Hiſtory would have been thereby deſtroyed; but notwithſtanding the Eaſineſs of the Diſproof of the Evangelical Hiſtory, if it had been falſe, and the inceſſant Endeavours of the Adverſaries of Chriſtianity to find out ſome Falſhood therein; it is, nevertheleſs, a Hiſtory of very good Credit now, cavilled at perhaps, but not denied, nor pretended to be diſproved either by *Jews* or *Mahometans*, or any other ſort of Infidels; and it hath been of the like good Credit for many hundred Years paſt, even ever ſince the firſt Publication of it; and it is not ſo much as contradicted in any Point by any other Hiſtorian, that living in or near the Time of its writing, was in a Capacity to contradict it upon good Grounds: And as there is no Evidence, that the Goſpel Hiſtory was contradicted, when it was firſt publiſhed, and might moſt eaſily have been diſproved, if it had been falſe; ſo there is on the other Side as good Evidence as ſuch a Matter is capable of, that it was never thus contradicted and diſproved; becauſe, if the Facts recorded in the Evangelical Hiſtory, had been then denied or diſproved by any competent and credible Witneſſes, 'tis impoſſible that the Chriſtian Doctrine, which was grounded upon, and chiefly eſtabliſhed by theſe Facts, ſhould ever have ſpread, as by the Confeſſion of all Parties it did from the Time that it began to be preached by the Apoſtles; nothing but

but the ſtrong Evidence that there was of the Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory, could have ſupported the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, when it had nothing to recommend itſelf by, but its Purity and Truth, againſt that violent Oppoſition which it met with every-where.

If the Goſpel Hiſtory be falſe, there was manifeſtly ſuch a Complication of moſt horrid Wickedneſs in the Publiſhers and Compilers of it, as it is not fair to ſuppoſe even one ſingle Man would be guilty of; and much leſs can it be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that ſeveral Men did conſent to the reporting of ſo many, and ſuch notorious and hurtful Untruths.

'Tis not credible, that ſo much as one Man ſhould be found ſo fooliſh as to ſacrifice his Life to a known Lye, and that too an unprofitable Lye to himſelf, to his Family, and to all the World, and this only to ſave his Reputation; it is much leſs credible, that ſo many Men, *viz.* all the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, and moſt, if not all the reſt of our Lord's immediate Diſciples, ſhould be guilty of ſuch prodigious and unheard-of Folly; and it is leaſt of all credible, that among ſo many as there were that bore Witneſs of the Facts recorded in the Evangelical Hiſtory, not ſo much as one Man ſhould be found, that was honeſter and wiſer than the reſt; not one that could be perſuaded to give Glory to God by the Confeſſion of his Fault, and Satisfaction to the World by a publick owning of the Cheat he had been engaged in; not one that would chuſe to undergo the Diſgrace of a Lyar, rather than the ſhameful Death of a Malefactor.

No Threats or Puniſhments could move the Witneſſes of thoſe things that are recorded in the Evangelical Hiſtory, ſo much as to deſiſt from giving freſh Teſtimony to the Truth of the

the Things which they had once related; upon this Condition alone, any of them might have expected both a Pardon for what they had done before, and likewiſe all fitting Favour and Encouragement.

If there be no Untruth appearing in a Relation, and no Gain, or other Advantage, that the Reporters may be ſuppoſed to make to themſelves by it, it may very reaſonably be preſumed, that the Report is true; much more when, far from being a profitable and advantageous Lye, if it was ſo, on the contrary, it is very prejudicial to their worldly Intereſt, expoſing them to all ſorts of Perſecutions from all ſorts of Men.

The ſpeedy Converſion to Chriſtianity, of ſuch a great Number of Men in all Parts of the World by the Apoſtles Miniſtry, is a direct Proof of that Gift of Tongues, wherewith we believe they were endued; and whoever can believe, that they had that Gift, which was peculiar and extraordinary, and ſuch as had never been heard of before, may, I think, more eaſily believe all the other Miracles that they are reported to have done, which were not near ſo wonderful, which were ſuch as had been done by other Prophets in former Times.

'Tis to be conſidered, that the Religion which the Apoſtles were to preach in the World, was the moſt contrary that could be to the carnal Luſts and Paſſions of Men; that it promiſed no worldly Greatneſs, no Increaſe of Riches, no Enjoyment of ſenſual Pleaſures; but on the contrary, taught all thoſe that embraced it, to be mortified to all theſe things, and not to ſet their Affections on any Things here below; that it propoſed to Man's Belief ſuch Doctrines, as to the carnal

carnal Minds of Men, could not but appear fooliſh and incredible.

The more we conſider the Principles on which the Truth of the Matters of Fact of the Scripture of the New Teſtament is eſtabliſhed, the leſs we ſee how any of them may be called into queſtion: Can we deny that ever Chriſt was, that he had any Diſciples, and that thoſe Diſciples did believe him to be the Meſſiah? But it were to doubt alone of a Matter of Fact, which hath always been owned by the *Thalmudiſts*, by *Julian*, *Porphyry*, and all the Enemies of Chriſtianity: On the other Hand, it is an eaſy Matter to ſhew the Abſurdity of ſuch an Opinion: Shall we queſtion, but that, if Jeſus died and did not riſe, his Diſciples ſhould not, by that very thing, have been undeceived of the Opinion they might have had, that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, the Son of God? But either they underſtood nothing by theſe two Words, the Meſſiah, the Son of God, or they underſtood any thing elſe but a Man, who, after he had been crucified, ſhould remain for ever under the Empire of Death: Shall we deny that the Diſciples did proclaim the Reſurrection of Chriſt after his Crucifixion by the *Jews*? But the Thing ſpeaks of itſelf, all the World has heard of the Preaching of the Apoſtles, who publiſhed the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and it is upon their Teſtimony that People believed: Shall we think, that the Diſciples of Jeſus let run a very long Space of Time, as twenty or thirty Years, after the Crucifixion of their Maſter, and that then having gathered Strength, and having been at Leiſure to contrive an Impoſture, they all on a ſudden appeared in the World, and preached that Jeſus was raiſed from the Dead? But if it were ſo, how could thoſe who have written, or ſuppoſed the Books of the New Teſtament,

make People believe, that the Disciples of Jesus published his Resurrection some Weeks after he had been crucified? How did the *Jews* never bethink themselves to give the Lye to our Scripture on that Account? How come the Christians to keep two Festivals one after another; one of which is to commemorate the Death and Resurrection of our Saviour; and the other, the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, which was given them to go and preach the Gospel in all Places? How, if the Disciples had published their Master's Resurrection long after his Death, had they not been asked, What have you done since your Jesus was raised? Why did he not rise sooner, or why do you preach his Resurrection so late? How could the *Jews* be forced to say, that his Disciples had carried away his Body, if his Resurrection had been published so late? How do you see some few Years after the Death of Christ, Christian Churches everywhere established by the Testimony and Preaching of the Apostles? Shall we think, that it was out of Pride or Revenge, that the Disciples of Jesus published his Resurrection, with Intent to make the high Priests and Scribes be accounted Parricides, or to perpetuate their own Names? But who could imagine, that the Disciples should think of being revenged of those, who had undeceived them of their Prejudices; that they should think of avenging themselves by forging a ridiculous Fable, and that they would avenge themselves, by exposing themselves to a certain Death, and inevitable Torments? And as to ambitious Thoughts, which might be imputed to them, who can believe, that they should come into their Minds immediately after the Death of him, whom they were to be grounded upon? Had they not been very reasonable to aspire

after

after Glory or Greatneſs, when their Hopes had juſt been cut off with their Meſſiah? Are Fiſhermen capable of that Reſolution, and of thoſe Sentiments? Indeed, had that been their Aim, they had quickly gone back; and the Infamy which was preſently faſtened to their Profeſſion, together with the Sufferings and Perſecution which it brought upon them, had quickly made them lay aſide ſo ridiculous and ſo fooliſh a Deſign.

If the Diſciples Teſtimony is falſe, we muſt needs believe, that theſe Men were mad, or deſperately wicked, nay both; nevertheleſs their Preaching manifeſts the Glory of their Innocence and Wiſdom, to confound that double Calumny. Why do not People read the Books of thoſe admirable Writers? And there they will ſee Probity, Sincerity, and Unintereſtedneſs, joined to the moſt refined and wholeſome Morality that ever was.

Some People may, by Prejudice, call in queſtion ſome palpable Truths, or refer to ſome odd and extravagant Cauſes, Matters of Fact truly miraculous; but there is none will die to maintain they have ſeen what they have not ſeen, when at the ſame time they profeſs to believe Impoſture a Crime worthy of Death; and when they may be belyed by ſo great a Number of Witneſſes, that it would be a Piece of mere Folly to pretend to impoſe upon Men in that Reſpect.

If the Apoſtles did expect eternal Life from Chriſt, it follows, that they neither could look upon him as an Impoſtor, nor back his Impoſture, nor be Impoſtors themſelves, as they muſt needs be, if the Chriſtian Religion is not true; but it is certain, that the Diſciples did expect eternal Life from Chriſt, ſince Chriſt never propoſed any other Object to their Faith; that he foretels to them nothing but Croſſes and Tribulations in this

World, proclaiming openly, that his Kingdom is not of this World; since Experience, Example, and Reason, teach them the same thing; and that the Apostles themselves in their Epistles declare, that they expect nothing but Crosses and Sufferings, comparing their Life to a Fight, to a Wrestling, the World to a Field of Battle; professing themselves Christ's Champions, and rejoicing to suffer in Hopes of a Crown which is kept for them.

If the Apostles had contrived among themselves to testify, that they had seen Christ raised from the Dead, though that were false, that Agreement could not have been made, but some one or other, to avoid the Punishment, would have discovered to the *Jews* the Imposture with all its Circumstances; there being no Question to be made, that if Christ, when living, was betrayed, he would be so much sooner, when dead; for one might have expected something from Christ alive, but there is nothing to be expected from Christ dead, but Misery and Torments, with the Shame and Remorse, to have followed an Impostor.

What Probability is there, that the Disciples of Christ, who had been cowardly and timorous, when they thought to do Service to God by suffering for Christ, whom they believed to be their Messiah, should become stedfast, courageous, undaunted in the greatest Dangers, invincible amidst the most violent Temptations, when they know, that they do no Service to God in adhering to the Gospel; and that on the contrary, they only disgrace themselves by a downright Imposture?

The Apostles of Christ have truly and sincerely believed the Miracles, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, and the pouring down of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost; then these four

Events are true, the Inference is plain; becauſe theſe are not Matters of Fact capable of Fallacy, and about which one may be deceived; eſpecially concerning the Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, by which they had received the Gift of Tongues, which they continually made an Experience of.

The moſt important Articles of the Chriſtian Religion are ſo firmly grounded upon Matters of Fact, that one may reaſonably affirm, that there is no Matter of Fact in the World ſo well eſtabliſhed, as thoſe which make the Support of the Chriſtian Religion; for of what Matter of Fact are there whole Nations for Witneſſes, as there are of the Miracles of Chriſt? Of what Matter of Fact do the Witneſſes take more Care to be rightly informed, than in the Caſe of a Pretenſion a Man makes to the Title of the Meſſiah? Of what Matter of Fact muſt one be as fully convinced to bear with its Difficulties, as of that of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, after having been an Eye-witneſs of his Crucifixion; that is, after having ſeen him puniſhed by the Magiſtrate, the Deteſtation of the whole Nation, and apparently forſaken by God?

That the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt, and the wiſe Mens Arrival, frightned *Herod*, is a notorious Matter of Fact, ſealed by the Murder of the Children of *Bethleem*, related to *Auguſtus* with the Death of *Antipater*, and of which *Macrobius*, a dignified Heathen, hath kept up the Memory; therefore, tho' *Joſephus* hath not mentioned it, that Matter of Fact cannot be thought doubtful.

As there is no Chimæra more extravagant, than to aſcribe to a Dozen of Fiſhermen, whoſe Maſter hath been crucified in *Judæa* by publick Order, and by means of the Hatred of their whole Nation; to aſcribe, I ſay, to them the Deſign to go and perſuade that whole Nation,

and all the gentile World, that that Man is raiſed from the Dead, that he reigns in Heaven, that he hath ſent them from thence the miraculous Gift of ſpeaking different Languages, and to heal all ſorts of Diſeaſes, in caſe that Jeſus is not really raiſed from the Dead, and hath not granted them thoſe Favours: There is nothing ſo reaſonable as to conclude, that, ſince they have witneſſed that Matter of Fact, and have eſtabliſhed it by all the Proofs capable of convincing thoſe whom the only Difficulty of the thing could have ſtartled, tho' they had had no other Prejudice againſt it; there is nothing more certain, than thoſe Matters of Fact ſupported by ſuch Proofs.

'Tis very important to obſerve, that the Books of the New Teſtament were written before the Overthrow of the *Jewiſh* Commonwealth; there is none but ſome of St. *John*'s Works, which were written ſince the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; it having been ſo ordered by the divine Providence, to the end that the whole Nation of the *Jews*, coming conſtantly for the Space of near Five and thirty Years to *Jeruſalem*, three times a Year at the three ſolemn Feaſts, they might inquire themſelves into the Truth of the Matters of Fact contained in the Goſpels, and the Acts of the Apoſtles.

When any Matters of Fact are atteſted by ſuch Witneſſes, as cannot be imagined capable of being deceived themſelves, or willing to deceive others, and the Facts related by them are ſuch as could not poſſibly be repreſented falſely without a certain Diſcovery; no greater Evidence can be required for the Proof of them; and it is plain, that the Miracles and Prophecies mentioned in the New Teſtament, are ſuch kind of Facts, and ſo atteſted.

The Difference that may sometimes be observed in the several Relations of the same Story by the several Evangelists, is so very inconsiderable, that far from being a just Objection against the Truth of the History, it is rather a Proof and Confirmation of it; for 'tis an Argument, that the Evangelists did not confer together in the writing of their Histories, and that they did not copy or transcribe from one another; but that every one of them reported the Story he wrote in such Manner, as he himself remembred it to have been, and with such Circumstances as he himself took most Notice of.

CHAP. X.

Of the Truth and Excellency of the Christian Religion.

IF the Matters of Fact related in the New Testament are true, they are sufficient Proofs of the Truth and divine Authority of all the Doctrines that are therein taught.

The Truth of the Christian Religion is evident even to a Demonstration; for it is as demonstrable, that there is a God, as it is that I myself am, or that there is any thing else in the World; because nothing could be made without a Maker, or created without a Creator; and it is as demonstrable, that this God, being the Author of all the Perfections in Men, must himself be infinitely perfect; that he is infinitely wise, and just, and holy, and good; and that accord-

ing to theſe Attributes, he could not ſuffer a falſe Religion to be impoſed on the World in his own Name, with ſuch manifeſt Tokens of Credibility, that no Man can poſſibly diſprove it, but every one is obliged to believe it.

Christ and his Apoſtles, conſidered as mere Men, unaſſiſted by any higher Power, could not be the Authors of the Miracles, Prophecies, and Doctrines recorded in the New Teſtament; but they have ſuch certain Marks and Characters of Divinity upon them, that we cannot be miſtaken in attributing them to God; and 'tis very improper and abſurd, to aſcribe them to evil Spirits.

There is no End or Deſign imaginable, ſufficient to have determined the ſuppoſed Author of the New Teſtament to undertake ſuch a Work; and if the principal Matters of Fact contained in it, both common and extraordinary, had not been true, 'twould have been utterly impoſſible, that the Chriſtian Religion ſhould ever have been believed and propagated in the World, in the Manner we find it is at preſent: We cannot account for the Contrivance of the Chriſtian Religion from any End or Motive, that was likely to put a Man upon ſuch a Work; becauſe it is very manifeſt from the whole Tenour of this Religion, that the Author of it, if it had been an Impoſture, could not have promiſed himſelf any kind of Advantage from his Undertaking; but if there was any End or Motive in Nature, ſufficient to determine a Man to invent ſuch a Religion as the Chriſtian, it is impoſſible to conceive he ſhould have made and contrived it in all its Parts and Circumſtances, juſt ſuch as it is delivered to us in the Scriptures; and that, ſo contrived, it ſhould have been entertained,

tained, propagated, and fixed in the World upon lasting Foundations.

'Tis impossible that Persons of such Characters as Christ and his Disciples were represented to be, should invent and contrive the Christian Doctrine and Institution, or perform those things that are recorded of them, merely by their own Skill and Power; that they should pretend to have done such extraordinary Facts as are attributed to them in the New Testament, if they were not the true and immediate Instruments by whom they were done; that such Multitudes of Persons as we there read of should believe these Facts, and embrace Christianity upon the Credit of them, if they were not true; or should pretend to believe them, if they were not really persuaded of their Truth.

'Tis possible indeed for Men to suffer all manner of Affliction, and even to die Martyrs for the falsest and most absurd Religion that can be devised; but then 'tis certain also, that they most truly and firmly believe what they suffer for: There never was, or ever can be, such an extravagant Army of Martyrs and Confessors, as did or will renounce all the Comforts and Satisfactions of Life, endure Grief and Pain chearfully, and be ready, upon all Occasions, to lay down their Lives for the Profession of such Matters of Fact, as they are all infallibly convinced are false, and which they are sure all their Persecutors have the same Reason to know are false, that they have.

God may justly condemn us for our Disbelief of the Christian Religion, because we believe other Matters of Fact upon less Evidence; and because we are obliged to believe such Facts as have these Appearances of Truth, which the Christian

Chriſtian Religion hath, tho' they ſhould really be falſe.

We are to judge of things by the Faculties God has given us, according to thoſe Grounds and Meaſures of Truth he hath ſuited and proportioned to them; and therefore, when we have the greateſt Aſſurance of a thing that we are capable of, according to the preſent Frame of our Nature, and the State of things in the World, it would be highly unreaſonable in us to deny it, whatever it was, barely upon a Suſpicion it might be falſe, though it ſhould afterwards really prove to be ſo: But if what we had this apparent Proof of, was a Matter of Concern and Importance to us, upon the Belief or Diſbelief of which, our utmoſt Happineſs or Miſery ſeemed to depend, and we ſhould preſer a mere Suſpicion to all the appearing Marks and Characters of Truth; God might as juſtly puniſh us for diſbelieving a real Error upon ſuch Grounds, as for rejecting the Truth; it is not whether our Opinions are true or falſe, but whether we have judged well or ill, that we are accountable for.

For a Man to receive a Book as written by another Perſon, and not to receive a Book as written by a Prophet or an Apoſtle, when he hath as much Reaſon to receive one as the other, and no more Reaſon to reject one than the other, is not Judgment, or Diſcretion, or reaſonable Caution, but manifeſt Prejudice and Partiality.

It muſt be, and is granted by all, that at the firſt preaching of Chriſtianity, all worldly Power and Intereſt were on the other ſide, and engaged moſt ſtrongly to hinder the Growth and Spreading of it: Now, when Truth is on one ſide, and Power and Intereſt on the other, 'tis not impoſſible, that Truth may at laſt prevail againſt Intereſt, and bring the Power alſo to be

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of its ſide; but if Truth, and Power, and Intereſt, are all on the ſame ſide from the Beginning, then it is utterly impoſſible, that an Impoſture, quickly diſcovered to be an Impoſture, and which ſerved no worldly Intereſt, ſhould ever have ſo gained Ground as Chriſtianity did.

GRANTING our Saviour's Reſurrection, it cannot be ſuppoſed that he was an Impoſtor, without ſuppoſing that God himſelf did conſent to the Impoſture, and work the moſt evident Miracle that ever was done, on purpoſe to perſuade Men to believe a Lye.

IF indeed we are deceived in our Saviour, it muſt be ſaid, that God himſelf hath deceived us, having given us all the Reaſon imaginable to believe him to be, as he ſaid he was, the Son of God.

ALL the Proof that we ever require of the Authority of any ancient Law, is a true Copy of it, and a good Hiſtory or Record of its being made at ſuch a Time, by ſuch a King, confirmed by the Tradition of all the intermediate Ages to our Time, which have allowed of its Authority, by citing it as a Law of the Land, by pleading from it, and by giving Judgment according to it; and he who will not allow of the ſame Proof and Authority of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, ſo many hundred Years ago eſtabliſhed, is very unreaſonable.

IF Men are reſolved not to be perſuaded, as long as there is any Poſſibility of Doubt or Scruple left; if they are reſolved not to believe, unleſs they have juſt that very Evidence given them, that they themſelves are pleaſed to require; if they will boldly and arrogantly take upon them to teach God (as if he knew it not) what Evidence he ought to give Men of the Truth of Religion, and are reſolved to find and make Exceptions againſt any other; let them look to it;

God

God hath done enough already to ſatisfy our ſober Judgments, and he will not do every thing that we can think of, to gratify our wild and extravagant Fancies; he is reſolved to deal with us as with Men, to incline, not to determine our Choice, to perſuade, not to force us to be happy.

'Tis plain, that if Men do not ſee the Truth when 'tis placed in ſo clear a Light, as 'tis in already, the Reaſon muſt be, becauſe they wilfully ſhut their Eyes; or elſe are ſo blinded by a Love of this World, or of their ſinful Luſts, that if the Light were ten times brighter than it is, they would ſee no more than they do now; and it would be to as little Purpoſe, in order to the Conviction of ſuch perverſe and obſtinate Men, to add any more, or ſtronger Proofs of the Truth of Religion, as it would be to light up Abundance of Torches to a Man that is quite blind. Therefore the proper Cure of Infidelity is, not the Addition of more Proof of the Truth of Religion, but a right Preparation and Diſpoſition of Mind, to conſider well the Proof thereof that is offered; which is ſufficient to convince and perſuade all thoſe that have a Love of Truth, and a Will diſpoſed to Virtue.

The Chriſtian Revelation in the New Teſtament, is atteſted as well as, nay better than, that which Jews and Chriſtians both do jointly receive for a divine Revelation in the Old; and there is no ſuch Diſagreement between the Contents of theſe two, as ſhould in Reaſon prejudice any who embrace the Old againſt the New; quite otherwiſe, they do ſo mutually confirm and illuſtrate each other, that either both muſt be, or it ſeems very hard to conceive how either of them can be, true and divinely inſpired.

What-

Whatever Degree of Certainty the *Jews* can pretend to, that the Actions and Doctrines of *Moses* and the Prophets are faithfully reported, and transmitted pure to the Men of this, or any assignable Distance of Time, from the Age of the first Actors or Relators; Christians have all that Certainty, and more, for the Actions and Doctrines of Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, being so reported and transmitted.

The History of the Evangelists hath all the Attestation we could fairly expect, not only from the Christians, but even from *Jews* and *Pagans* both; who, tho' they do not say all the glorious things of Jesus which the Apostles do, yet say enough to convince us, that the Fame and Excellence of his Miracles, and his Doctrine, were abundantly notorious to all the World; that is an Advantage which the Antiquity of *Moses* rendered his History incapable of.

Moses wrote, and *Israel* believed, without any visible Danger from their doing so; but the Evangelists taught and wrote, and the first Christians believed, at their utmost Peril; nay, at the certain and foreseen Expence of Goods and Fame, of Liberty and Life: Nothing can be an Argument of Sincerity and Conviction, if this be not, that Men had fair Warning how dear that Behaviour would cost them, and yet could not be wrought upon so much as to keep their Opinions to themselves.

The *Jewish* Tradition is as much inferior to the Christian, as the Testimony of one Nation, separated from the rest of the World, is less unexceptionable than the unanimous Concurrence of all Countries, and Climates, and Languages.

If the Miracles of Jesus, and his Apostles, be Testimonies of a divine Mission superior to those of *Moses* and the Prophets; if the Certainty that the

the Christians have of these being faithfully reported and transmitted to the present Age, be at least equal to that of the *Jews* for the Records of their Religion, then with regard to the external Evidence of both, the *Jews* who receive the Old Testament as divine, ought, upon their own Principles, to receive the New as such.

The Christian Dispensation, which did not pretend to reprove the Jewish of Error, but only of Imperfection, God thought fit to strengthen with Testimonies yet more clear and irrefragable, such as might satisfy the *Jews*, that he preferred this before all his former Revelations, as much as the Marks of his Power and Presence shone brighter and more amazingly glorious upon this, than they had done upon any other.

He that could take his Life again after three Days, gave a much clearer Proof that he laid it down of himself, than if he had taken his Enemies at their Word, and never laid it down at all; and one or two Angels at his empty Tomb, were more substantial Witnesses of his being the Son of God with Power, than could more than twelve Legions of that heavenly Host have been to rescue him from *Pilate*, and the *Jews* before his Passion.

All Religions of human Institution, and even that of divine among the *Jews* too, grew into Reverence by the Help of Power, the Countenance of Authority, and the Encouragement of great Successes; the Gospel, quite otherwise, was planted in Weakness and Disgrace, in Persecutions and Afflictions, in Tears, and Prayers, and Patience; it was watered with the Blood of many Thousands of its Professors, and the more Endeavours were applied to cut it down, or to root it out, the more it grew.

Had

Had the Gospel never been persecuted, we could not so well have known, that its Doctrines were not of Men; and had it not been victorious and peaceable at last, we could not have certainly concluded, that its Doctrines must needs be of God.

If we believe that God hath taken so much Care of Mankind, as to make any certain Revelation of his Will to them, and of the Way to eternal Happiness; let us next consider, whether any Religion in the World can come in Competition with the Christian, and with half that Reason pretend to be from God, that Christianity is able to produce for itself; whether we consider the Things to be believed, or the Duties to be practised, or the Motives and Arguments to the Practice of those Duties, or the divine Confirmation that is given to the Whole.

Christ did not properly abrogate and repeal the ritual and ceremonial Judaical Laws; but they having continued as long as they were designed to do, and there was any Use of them, abated and ceased of themselves.

Christ was born when all the Prophecies concerning his Coming were fulfilled; and when the World was in Expectation of him, and had such general Notice of his Coming, in a Time the most unlikely for an Imposture to pass undiscovered; and therefore the most seasonable for Truth to manifest itself; since that must needs be true, which neither Learning, nor Prejudice, nor Vice, nor Interest, could prove to be false; the Accomplishment of Prophecies, and the Conversion and Martyrdom of such Numbers of Men, in such an Age, recommends the Gospel to us, with all the Advantage which any Juncture of Time could give.

The

The *Jews* expected, that if our Saviour was the true Messiah, he should have come down from the Cross, and saved himself; as if, when he had wrought so many other and great Miracles, God had been bound to gratify their Curiosity; and as if our Saviour were not as much declared to be the Son of God by rising again from the Dead, as if he had come down from the Cross.

It is not credible, that Almighty God would ever permit that more and greater Miracles should be done by an Impostor, than ever had been done before by any true Prophet; which yet is manifestly the Case, if indeed our Saviour was an Impostor.

The Christian Religion must needs be true, since it is confirmed by so many unsuspected Witnesses; and we cannot imagine without Folly, that the Prophets had an Insight into the Time to come, merely to get Credit to a Fiction; that *John* Baptist, having been at first looked upon by the *Jews* to be the Messiah, should have refused that glorious Title, out of Compliance to a Seducer; that the Apostles, and other Disciples, would have laid down their Fortunes, Honour, Quiet, and Lives, for one whom they knew to be a false Christ; that Heaven would have given its Approbation to a Lye by sensible Miracles; that the Heart of Man should find the Supply of all its Wants in an Imposture; that the Events should be conformable to an Error; and that the Revelation of *Moses*, and the natural Religion, should unanimously give Evidence to a Fable.

Within a very short time after Christ, the World was filled with Christians; St. *Paul* writes to those that were in *Asia*, *Greece*, and *Italy*; St. *Peter*, to those that were in *Pontus*; St. *John*, to those that were among the *Parthians*;

thians. There were some even in the Emperor's Court of that *Nero*, who put to Death St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, the Year of our Lord 67. which is so much the more surprizing, that the Christian Doctrine, in what it teacheth to believe and practise, seems very ill contrived to get much Credit.

When a Profession requires nothing hard to practise, it may be easily embraced, and without much Examination; but when it engages us to overcome our Passions, and ourselves, to renounce the World, to expose ourselves to all Sorts of Afflictions, we are not naturally so credulous, nor so ready to engage in a Profession, attended with so much Trouble and Danger. Let us then conclude, that the Christians of the first Ages were compelled by the Love of Life, the greatest Spring of the Heart of Man, to consider well the Proofs of the Truth of the Gospel; so that if these Proofs were such as might be easily examined, we cannot at this Day call their Truth in question, since so many Martyrs have been perfuaded and convinced of it.

If the Relation we have of all the Miracles performed by the Disciples of Christ in his Name be true, the Gospel is divine, that is without Controversy; if it be false, the Conversion of Men was impossible, and the Name of Christian had never been known; for, to make People forsake Opinions of the same Antiquity with the World, which they have been possessed with from their Infancy, Opinions followed by Philosophers, Orators, Politicians, Kings, and great Men, in order to embrace new ones, which are above all Credibility and Likelihood, which are despised, rejected, condemned every-where; in a Word, which drew upon the Professors of them, the Hatred, Indignation and Fury of

the reſt of Mankind; to produce, I ſay, ſo rare and ſo divine an Effect, no leſs than a divine Cauſe and Demonſtration is required, all the Reaſonings and Arguings could not prevail ſo far; there was Occaſion for ſome more ſenſible Proofs of God's Will; and ſuch was the Nature of Miracles, which were ſenſible Demonſtrations both to Senſe and Reaſon.

What is Religion, but the Worſhip of the true God? And which is the true God, but he who hath made all things, and conſequently our Nature? 'Tis impoſſible he ſhould command us any thing in that Religion by which he will be worſhipped, but thoſe he inclines us to by the natural Sentiments he hath endowed us with; then the Laws of Religion ought to agree with thoſe that are truly natural; God does not contradict himſelf, and he cannot deceive us, which he ſhould do, if thoſe Sentiments which proceed from Nature, ſuch as he hath made it, ſhould dictate to us the contrary of what the true Religion teacheth us: Then it manifeſtly follows, that other Religions, which are all contrary to Reaſon, ought to be looked upon as falſe; and that the Chriſtian Religion only agreeing ſo wonderfully with what the natural Laws dictate to us, is the only true Religion of the God of Heaven and Earth.

The Diſciples of Chriſt rejoice in their Sufferings, thank God that they have ſuffered for his Name; it is, becauſe a divine Hand upholds them, and becauſe they are ſure of a Reward; that Certainty is enough to demonſtrate the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

God could not have conſulted the Honour and Advantage of Truth more, than by ordering Matters ſo, that it ſhould not, for ſome time, be poſſible for Men to retain this and their worldly Con-

Conveniencies together; because it was hereby evident, that the renouncing those for the Truth's sake, could not proceed from any other Motive, than the over-ruling Power of this upon their Consciences and Understandings.

As the Truth of the *Jewish* Tradition is unquestionably attested to by several Rites and solemn Acts of Religion in constant Use among them, so is the Christian likewise; Christians being baptized with Water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, their receiving the Elements of Bread and Wine in the blessed Supper, as Signs of their Lord's Body and Blood, in Remembrance of his Death and Passion; and those Festivals of the Church which are celebrated in Honour of his Nativity, Resurrection from the Dead, Ascent into Heaven, and sending the Holy Ghost, these are Proofs of the Facts, the Memory whereof is perpetuated by them; and these could never have obtained (as they have done) in all Parts of the World, had there not been a just Foundation for them, in the Commands by which those Sacraments were instituted, in the Acknowledgments of their Necessity and Efficacy, and the Sense and Experience of those Benefits actually conferred.

If the Apostles had not been the best, they must have been the worst of Men, for imposing upon the World, upon the Pretence of a divine Mission and Authority; and yet this they must do with no other Design, but to promote Virtue and Holiness, which no ill Man could design to his own certain Loss and Destruction in this World and the next; and the less Men believe of the next World, the more fond they are to make sure of this.

What Qualifications can be desired in any Witness, which do not all concur in the Apostles and Evangelists? The Apostles shew by their Writings, that they were Men of Understanding sufficient to apprehend the things they write about; and indeed what Man of any Understanding, is not capable of witnessing that to be true which he sees, and hears, and perceives, with every Sense? They had all the Advantages and Opportunities that ever any Witnesses could have, to know what they said to be true; and they were plain Men without Art or Disguise, bred up most of them to mean and laborious Callings, and they had no Expectation of any thing but Sufferings in this Life, and therefore were as far from any Temptation, as from any Possibility of imposing upon the World; and they set down their own Faults upon all Occasions, as particularly as they do whatever else they relate, having no Regard to any thing but Truth.

It is certain that *Judas* himself cleared our Saviour's Innocence, by betraying him, more than any other Man could have done, who had not been his Disciple; and his making that Confession, and then his dying upon that Account, and in that Manner he did, may afford us that Evidence which we must have wanted to certify us in the Truth of the Christian Religion, if Christ had not been betrayed by any but one of his Disciples.

Either the Christian Religion was propagated by Miracles, or it was not; if it was, then the Miracles by which it was propagated, prove it to be from God; if it was not propagated by Miracles, the Propagation itself is a Miracle, and sufficient to prove it to be from him.

Indeed

INDEED it were very hard, and very ſtrange, if that which is true, ſhould be ever the leſs certain, or the leſs to be regarded and eſteemed; becauſe there may be other things that are falſe, of which ſome Men are as firmly perſuaded, and are as much concerned for them, as any one can be for the Truth itſelf; and yet this is the wiſeſt thing that many have to pretend againſt the Certainty of the Religion in which they were baptized, that there are many Impoſtures in the World, and none is without its Zealots to appear in Vindication of it: I am confident no Man ever parted with any thing but his Religion upon ſo weak a Pretence.

How could a Man that was condemned to die for calling himſelf the Son of God, be more remarkably vindicated, and more clearly proved to be ſo, than by being raiſed from the Dead by the Power of God? And if he was the Son of God, the Doctrine which he taught was true, and from God.

NOT only there is no Contradiction to the Law in the Goſpel, but the Law cannot be true, except you allow the Truth of the Goſpel; for no other way poſſible is there to reconcile the Promiſes made in the Law, but as they are fulfilled in the Goſpel, of which one may ſee ſome few Inſtances out of many, in *Gen.* xlix. 10. *Jerem.* xxxiii. 17, 18, 20, 21. *Iſa.* chap. liii. *Dan.* ix. 24, &c. 2 *Chron.* vii. 16. *Hag.* ii. 3, 7, 9. *Malach.* iii. 1.

JOSEPHUS ſaith, that the great Cauſe of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and of the *Jews*, was their Expectation of their Meſſiah then to come; for he ſaith, that the chief thing which incited them to the War with the *Romans*, was a doubtful Prophecy (as he calls it) found in the holy Scriptures, that about that time one of their

Country ſhould be Monarch of the whole World; which Prophecy, he then applied to the Reign of *Veſpaſian*, as if fulfilled in him.

One would think this enough to open the Eyes of the *Jews*, that while they have obſtinately rejected the ſure and infallible Marks, which God by his Prophets hath given of the Meſſiah, they have left to themſelves no Marks or Rules at all, whereby they can know him from every Impoſtor.

The *Jews* never ſet up any falſe Meſſiah, nor did any pretend to it, till near the Time that our bleſſed Saviour came into the World, which was the Time foretold by *Daniel* and the Prophets; and ſince that time, they have been perpetually ſetting up of falſe Meſſiahs, one after another, even to our Times; which ſhews plainly, that the Time wherein our Meſſiah did come, was the Time wherein he was generally expected by the *Jews*; and that then they underſtood their Laws and the Prophets, in the ſame Senſe that we have done, as to the Time of the Meſſiah's coming, tho' now they would diſſemble it.

Suppose there was a Poſſibility in the Nature of Things, that the Chriſtian Religion might be falſe, he that from thence ſhould conclude that it is really ſo, without any other Reaſons to ſupport his Opinion, and in Oppoſition to all that Multiplicity of Proof that hath been offered for the Truth of it, muſt not pretend Reaſon, but only Reſolution, for his Infidelity.

All that hath ever been urged againſt the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion is, in ſhort, but this; that Hiſtories have been falſe, Prophecies and Miracles have been counterfeit; there have been falſe Pretences to Revelation, Books have been forged, ſtrange things have been

been ſaid and done by Men, and ſtranger by evil Spirits; but it can no more be inferred from hence, that the Chriſtian Hiſtory and Revelation, and all the Chriſtian Prophecies and Miracles are falſe, and the Scriptures of the New Teſtament are forged, than it can be concluded, that all Men or mad or aſleep, becauſe there have been ſeveral in theſe Conditions, that have thought themſelves awake, and in their Senſes; or that all the Arguments and Proofs made uſe of in mathematical Knowledge are falſe, becauſe ſome pretended Demonſtrations have been undemonſtrated and confuted.

They that believe the Chriſtians to have been ſuch a powerful and prevailing Party, early enough to hinder the ſpreading and diſperſing of any Books that were written againſt them, believe, without any Ground or Warrant from Hiſtory, a more unaccountable and incredible Thing, than any that is recorded in the Goſpel.

For the full Satisfaction of ſome Men, with whom nothing but ſeeing is believing; it is neceſſary that our Saviour ſhould be born into the World in every Age of it, or indeed much oftner; and that in every Country at leaſt, if not in every Town and Village, he ſhould live, and preach, and do Miracles, and be crucified, and riſe again; for that theſe things have been once done, they cannot, they ſay, believe only upon the Teſtimony of other Men, who ſay they did ſee them; but that this ſhould be, is what, I preſume, none beſides themſelves can think it reaſonable either for Men to ask, or for God to grant.

Do not tell us, ſome ſay, of *Moſes*, and the Prophets, and of things that were done a great while ago, we know not when; we will have freſh Revelations, and new Miracles, or Meſ-

fengers from the Dead, or elſe we will not believe and repent, that we are reſolved on: But I would adviſe them before they fully determine to perſiſt in this Reſolution, to take a little time to conſider ſeriouſly, whoſe Intereſt and Concern it is, either that they ſhould believe or not believe; who it is that will be a Gainer, or a Sufferer, by the one, or by the other.

God hath ſent his Son to us with the Promiſe of eternal Life, and hath given us ſufficient Aſſurance of his divine Miſſion, and thereby of the Truth of that Revelation which he made: Now, if we will believe, 'tis well and good, the Profit will be all our own, but God will receive no Advantage to himſelf by our believing; but if we will not believe but juſt upon that very ſort of Proof, which we ourſelves are pleaſed to pitch upon, 'tis we only that ſhall ſuffer by our Unbelief; the infinite and eſſential Happineſs of God being as little capable of Diminution, as of Advancement.

The main and proper Intention of Chriſtianity, was to ſupply the Defects and Imperfections of the *Jewiſh* Religion, and to make Men much better than that weak and imperfect Inſtitution was able to do.

Whether we take Chriſtianity in its whole Complex, or in its ſeveral and diſtinct Branches, 'tis certainly the moſt excellent, the moſt compendious Art of happy Living; its very Tasks are Rewards, and its Precepts are nothing but a divine Sort of Alchymy, to ſublime at once our Nature and our Pleaſures.

The Laws of Chriſtianity are either ſuch as tend to the Perfection of human Nature, and to make Men ſingly and perſonally good, or ſuch as tend to the Peace and Happineſs of human Society. Our bleſſed Saviour did never intend,

by any Precept of our Religion, to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Justice, or Gratitude, or to offer Violence, in the least, to the common Reason of Mankind.

This is the Sum of the natural Law, that we should behave ourselves reverently and obediently towards the divine Majesty, and justly and charitably towards Men; and that, in order to the fitting of us for the better Discharge of these Duties, we should govern ourselves in the Use of sensual Delights, with Temperance and Moderation; and if we go over the Laws of Christianity, we shall find, that excepting a few particular, they injoin the very same things; only they have made our Duty more clear and certain.

The Precepts of no other Religion that ever yet appeared in the World, have advanced human Nature so much above itself, and are so well calculated for the Peace and Happiness of the World, as the Precepts of the Christian Religion are; for they strictly forbid the doing of Injuries by way of Prevention; and in case they happen, they endeavour to put a present Stop to the Progress of them, by so severely forbidding the revenging of them.

If Men would but live as Religion requires they should do, the World would be a quiet Habitation, a most lovely and desirable Place, in Comparison of what now it is.

Wherever the Doctrine of Christ hath its full Effect, it makes a mighty Change in a Man; they see things otherwise than they did before, and form a different Judgment of them; it endues them with a new Principle, and new Resolutions; giveth them another Spirit, and another Temper; a quite different Sense and Gust of things, from what they formerly had.

If Men would but be or do, what Christianity requires, there would be no Occasion for the Objection that is raised against it from the Divisions and Factions of Christians amongst them; and if Men will not, Christian Religion is not to be blamed for it, but those that act so contrary to the close Precepts and Directions of it.

Certainly we cannot better learn how God would have Men to live, than by seeing how God lived, when he was pleased to assume our Nature, and to become Man.

The great Aim and Design of the Christian Religion is, to bring us to obey God upon Principles of Love, and the Foundation of it is laid in the Love of God towards us.

The Christian Religion, far from dispiriting Men, teacheth them, upon the best and most rational Grounds, to despise Dangers, yea, and Death itself, the most formidable Evil in this World.

'Tis allowed on all Hands, that there never was so just and noble a Draught of Morality as the Christian, so full and consistent a Scheme of human Duty, laid down in so plain and simple a Manner, without any Art or Ostentation, and pressed upon Mankind with so much Earnestness and Authority, without any visible Interest or Advantage of the Writers, and without any worldly Dignity or Title, that made them superior to the lowest of those they preached and writ to. It must be likewise confessed, that the Ground and Reasons upon which the Practice of this Morality is enforced by the Preachers of it, are very new and surprizing; that the things they require Men to believe, in order to render the Practice of the Duties injoined them effectual, are very shocking and repugnant to the common Opinion and Prejudices of Mankid; but especially

cially thoſe of that Time in which they were firſt publiſhed; and that the very Language and Forms of Expreſſion, in which the great Articles of the Chriſtian Faith are delivered in the Scriptures, are very different from whatever we find uſed upon any Occaſion.

The Chriſtian Religion, as repreſented in the New Teſtament, is really more for the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind, than (ſo far as appears to us) it could have been, had Matters been ſo ordered as the ſeveral Objectors muſt, upon their own Principles, be ſuppoſed to deſire they ſhould be.

However Men may wiſh as to themſelves in particular, that they had not been abridged their ſinful Pleaſures, yet, in reſpect to the common Good of the Society, it muſt needs be confeſſed, by the moſt inveterate Enemies of Chriſtianity, and by thoſe who will believe nothing of another Life, that if the Chriſtian Religion were as generally practiſed as it is profeſſed, it would make Mankind as happy as it is poſſible for Men to be in this Life, through the Belief and Expectation of a Life to come.

The moral Precepts of the Law are not only retained, but even enforced and exalted in the Chriſtian Rule of Manners; and the Ceremonials, partly as Diſtinctions peculiar to that People, partly as Figures of things to come, but now already come, but upon both Accounts, neither of univerſal nor perpetual Obligation, are not ſo properly caſt off as worn out; they ceaſe of Courſe, becauſe the Grounds and Uſes to which they were appointed have long ſince ceaſed; as Promiſes are voided by being fulfilled; or, as Images become uſeleſs when their Originals are preſent; or, as Rules for educating Children

are laid aside, when the Heir is of Age, and their Aim is answered.

The *Jewish* Religion did not want noble Precepts and Exhortations to the Performance of its Duties, but in some manner it wanted Motives, since it had none but human and temporal; but in the Christian Religion, the Hearts and Wills of Men are captivated by Motives so universal and so exalted, that not only they counterpoise that Inclination which the temporal Conveniencies give to Men to disobey the Law of God, but human Passions are, as it were, brought to nothing before these sublime Objects; it is the Gospel which supplies us with Strength to perform our Duties, and to resist our Corruption, by opening all at once Heaven and Hell, by the Revelation of the glorious Immortality that attends the Faithful, and the eternal Torments which attend the Wicked.

The Privilege of the Christian Religion does consist, in that no other hath all the Advantages it is possessed with, and that it hath none of the Imperfections which are to be found in all other Religions: The false Religions have gratified an Inclination of Self-love, which being naturally suspended between the World and Religion, finds nothing pleasanter than to join them, thinking, by that Means, to reconcile our Duty and our Inclination, Conscience and worldly Interest; but the true Religion sets down, as a Principle to us, that that Agreement is impossible; that we must either glorify God by the Loss of the World, or enjoy the World by the Loss of Religion: Other Religions tend to the debasing of God, and exalting of Man; on the contrary, the Christian Religion tends to the debasing of Man, and exalting of God. The chief Nation of the World turns its Deities

into

into Monsters; and its Emperors, which were Monsters, into Deities: The Christian Religion, on the contrary, teaches us, that we owe ourselves intirely to God, and that God owes us nothing; it humbleth us by the Prospect of that Abyss which is between God and us; it shews us that we are odious, and that God is infinitely amiable: Who should not admire it?

Without a wilful Blindness, we must needs see that the Christian Religion is, in reality, nothing but a most pure and most spiritual Intercourse between the Perfections of God, which are made sensible to Man, and the Sentiments of the Heart of Man, which glorify and praise the Perfections of God; neither Flesh or Blood, neither the World, Nature, or Education, are capable of producing so great and so sublime an Effect; it can be the Production but of him who knows perfectly the Agreements of all things, and that our Heart was made to glorify God; and that the Glory of God was to be represented in our Hearts by Religion.

'Tis a Miracle peculiar to the Christian Religion, to make us happy by obliging us to Self-denial; but it is as great a one to make us clear-sighted, by making us sacrifice the Light of our Reason.

The Christian Religion is to be admired in all its Parts; there is no Vice whatever, but what it condemns, no Virtue, but what it commands: it does not only regulate outward Actions, but even extends to the purifying of their inward Springs; it prescribes us Rules for all the different States and Conditions of Men; it enforceth its Precepts by the noblest Examples imaginable; it affords us a perfect Pattern in the Person of Christ; and all that is attended with an infinite Number of effectual Motives or Reasons.

False

False Religions flatter Man, and undo him; the true one discovers him his Misery, and saveth him: The Devil murdered Man by promising him Life; *You shall not die*; but Christ revives us by making us sensible that we are dead: *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.*

What does God command us, when he injoins us to humble ourselves, but to acknowledge what we are? When he bids us to forgive, but to do to others, what we would have others do to us? When he obligeth us to love our Enemies, but what we stand in Need he should do himself in our Behalf? The Duties Christ prescribes us, are, in themselves, without Doubt, very sweet and just, and they become troublesome and ungrateful, only by the vicious Disposition of our Heart.

The Gospel is nothing but sound and refined Reason; there are no reasonable Men, but those who are truly Christians; they direct their Lives by those Sentiments the Creator inspires us with, and the Holy Ghost renews in their Soul; they think, speak, and act, according to those Sentiments; whereas most Men live like Brutes, according to the Impressions of Bodies upon them, and the Agitation or Tranquillity of their Mass of Blood.

The Morality of the greatest Men of heathen Antiquity is base, gross, and foolish, when compared to that learned by a small Number of Fishermen about the Lakes of *Galilee*, and since preached by them all the World over; and they have carried all Virtues so high, that they do not much less differ from common Virtues, than common Virtues differ from Vices.

The Benefit Christians receive by the Knowledge and Faith of Christ, is, not to be saved upon

upon eaſier Terms than the reſt of the World, but that they are more perfectly inſtructed in the Will of God, and the Means of Salvation; have more expreſs Revelations of the Rewards and Puniſhments of the next Life; have more expreſs Promiſes of Pardon and Forgiveneſs; are delivered from the Cheats and Impoſtures of evil Spirits, and have the powerful Aſſiſtances of divine Grace; that is, all the Helps, Advantages, Encouragements, and Obligations, to improve in Chriſtian Graces and Virtues, to avoid the threatned Miſeries, and to obtain the glorious Rewards of the next Life.

WHERE infinite loving Kindneſs, eternal Rewards, and eternal Puniſhments, do all concur to bring Men to the Practice of Virtue, no Motive can be wanting, by which human Nature is capable of being wrought upon.

OUR Saviour, far from uſing any Violence to compel Men to the Profeſſion of his Religion, tells them plainly, that if any Man will come after him, he muſt deny himſelf, take up his Croſs, and follow him.

WE find that *Moſes* was brought up in all the Wiſdom of the *Egyptians*; we find alſo, that St. *Paul* was brought up at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, in the Myſteries of the *Jewiſh* Religion; but Chriſt was nobody's Diſciple; his Soul, properly ſpeaking, received no Inſtructions but from the Holy Ghoſt; and it had not been fit, that the ſupreme Prophet of the Church had borrowed, even in his Infancy, his Light and Knowledge from Men.

ORDINARY Men have no other Rule or Principle of their Affections, but Self-love; they ſeek themſelves, as it were, in other Objects; they love in their Neighbour only that Affinity which binds them together; they have more or leſs

Tenderneſs

Tenderneſs for Perſons, according to their neareſt or fartheſt Relation to them, becauſe their Self-love is the Meaſure and firſt Cauſe of their other Affections: Chriſt, by a ſurprizing Prodigy, loves or hates Objects, not in relation to himſelf, but in relation to God, as he teſtifieth, when he ſaith, *Whoſoever ſhall do the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven, the ſame is my Brother, and Siſter, and Mother.*

CHAP. II.

Of MIRACLES.

MIRACLES are a proper Argument to convince us of a Thing obſcure, and hard to be believed, by ſomething that is more incredible, which yet we cannot deny, becauſe we ſee it done.

NONE can work a true and real Miracle, but God; and it cannot, without the higheſt Blaſphemy be ſuppoſed, that God would work a Miracle on purpoſe to ſet his Seal to a Lie: If this were poſſible, it would deſtroy all Revelation; therefore, where there can be no Doubt as to the Miracle, there can be no Scruple as to the Revelation, which that is brought to atteſt.

No Inſtance can be given, where any one true Miracle was wrought by a Perſon that made Uſe of it to prove any other Doctrine by, than what we have delivered in the Scriptures: By a true Miracle, is meant ſuch as is well atteſted to have been done, as thoſe recorded in the Scriptures; and can no more be accounted for without the Power

Power of God than they can; many of which I will allow to have been done upon other Occaſions, without any Application of them to the Advantage of the Religion of thoſe who performed them.

Tho' the Devil be, without Doubt, of much greater Power than we are; and underſtanding, better than we do, the Force of natural Cauſes, can do many Things, which to the Eyes of Men may appear miraculous, becauſe it may be paſt their Skill to give an Account of them by natural Cauſes; there is no Reaſon however, to believe that he can do a true Miracle; that is, that he can ever alter the Courſe of Nature, or produce any Effect but by the Means of natural Cauſes, working in ſuch a Manner, and by ſuch Laws and Rules, as God hath appointed. To ſuppoſe that the Devil can, at his Will, alter the Courſe of Nature, is to attribute to him ſuch a Power as is peculiar to the God of Nature, who only does great Wonders.

That our Saviour's Miracles were not wrought by the Help of the Devil, and conſequently that they were done by the Power of God, is abundantly evident from the Deſign of them, which was to eſtabliſh a Doctrine the moſt contrary that could be to the Devil's Intereſt.

It cannot be conceived conſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God, to permit that ſuch as are of honeſt Minds, and ſincere Lovers of Truth, ſhould, after a fair Examination of the Proofs on both ſides, have greater Reaſon to embrace Error than Truth, which yet they plainly have, in caſe the Miracles done by falſe Prophets be more and greater than have been done by any true Prophet, unleſs the Falſeneſs of the Doctrines, which they would thereby eſtabliſh, be more evident than the Truth of their Miracles.

It clearly appeared, that all our Saviour's former Miracles had been true, and wrought by a divine Power, when even after he had left this World, he was ſtill able to make good his Promiſe to his Diſciples, and to empower them to do greater Works in his Name, than he himſelf had done while he was living upon Earth.

Divine Truths are to reſt upon divine Teſtimonies, and are never ſo ſecurely learnt as at the Hands of them, who by miraculous and altogether ſuper natural Operations, give us all poſſible Aſſurance, that he who alone could enlighten their Minds with the Matter delivered, hath alſo conducted and aſſiſted their Tongues and Pens in the Manner of delivering it to others.

Operations manifeſtly above the Power of Nature and Art (ſuch, for Inſtance, as Miracles and Prophecies, properly ſo called) are a good Evidence that the Perſons by whom ſuch Things are done, and the Meſſages they bring, come from God; provided always, that to this external be added that intrinſick Evidence of their Doctrines; containing nothing unworthy of God, or contrary to our natural Notices of Things, or to any former Revelation of his atteſted in like Manner.

The ſureſt Character of a Miracle, is, when the Operation is made by a ſimple Act of the Will, and of a Will, to whoſe Command every Thing ſubmits.

For a farther Proof of the Reality of our Saviour's Miracles, let it be conſidered that they were infinite in Number, that they were univerſal, ſuch as extended to all Creatures, to Devils, to the Sea, to Winds, to Fiſhes, to Loaves, to Swine, to a Fig-Tree, to Water by changing it into Wine, and laſtly, to all Sorts of Diſtempers, even to Death itſelf; that they were all ſo many

many Mercies; that their Effects were not transient, but permanent; that all those Miracles were wrought by one Word's speaking; and that he gave to others, an Authority of working Miracles in his Name.

The Miracles of Jesus Christ have appeared Divine, chiefly in that they were made to authorize and establish a Religion adverse to the Devil, and to all that the Devil loves; *viz.* Superstitions, Idolatries, Errors, Vices, Sins; they were gracious and advantageous, he has not put any Body to Death, but hath raised from the Dead; he has not blinded, but restored the Sight; he hath caused none to be Sick, but has healed many; he hath raised no Tempests, but has appeased them.

The *Jews* say, We know that God spake unto *Moses:* But how did they know this, unless by his Miracles? Now, if they believe the Miracles of *Moses*, what Pretence can they make for not believing those of Christ, which so far excel the other both in Number and Greatness?

If God should gratify all Men in their Request, working new Miracles every Day for the Conviction of particular Persons, the Abundance of the Miracles that must then be wrought, would be so far from adding to the Proof of Christianity, that it would rather lessen or weaken that Proof of it which we have already; because Miracles (the propereſt Proof of a divine Revelation) would not be then so convincing as they are now; for that which makes Men wonder even at a true Miracle, is not so much because it is such an Operation as they cannot give a fair Account of by natural Causes, for this they cannot do; I'm confident, I may say they have not yet done it of many of the Works and Productions of Nature; but they therefore conclude such a Thing not to

be a natural Operation, becauſe it is not uſual, becauſe it is ſuch a Thing as was never before known to be done.

Very few even of thoſe who were Eye-witneſſes of our Saviour's Miracles, were the better for them; but many were a great deal worſe, wilfully blaſpheming that Spirit by which he wrought them; the opening of the Eyes of the Blind, did but make thoſe that ſaw the Miracle more blind than they were before; and when once a dead *Lazarus* did come forth out of his Grave, and appear to them, all the Effect that it had upon thoſe obſtinate and incredulous Men, was only, that it made them enter preſently into a cloſe Conſultation, to put to Death both Jeſus and *Lazarus* too.

The only End and Uſe of miraculous Gifts, is the Confirmation and Eſtabliſhment of Religion; and therefore, when this is fully confirmed and eſtabliſhed, they can be no longer needful.

The miraculous Power which accompanied the Goſpel at firſt, is now ceaſed, becauſe there is not the like Reaſon and Neceſſity for it; and the wiſe God, who is never wanting in what is neceſſary, does not uſe to be laviſh in that which is ſuperfluous.

By the Relation of *Tertullian*, Two hundred Years after Chriſt, the Gift of Healing all manner of Diſeaſes, by the Impoſition of Hands, was not ceaſed.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Of Prophecies, and particularly those concerning the Messiah.

THE Things foretold of the Messiah are of two Sorts: Some do only shew in the Negative, not that he who has them is the true Messiah, but that he who has them not cannot be such; of which Nature are those which relate to some outward Circumstances, as the Time and Place of his Birth, his Family and Kindred; others do politively demonstrate, that the Person in whom they are to be met with, is the true Messiah; of which kind are those Predictions that relate to his Doctrine, and Miracles, his Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and at last the Propagation of his Doctrine over the Face of the whole Earth, all which are such Properties as are compatible to none but the Messiah alone.

THIS is what we insist upon with Triumph, when asserting Jesus to be the Messiah, that he and no other Person answered those different Characters, and could have all the Predictions allowed to denote the Messiah truly affirmed of him, whether in the simple or figurative, or any sort of lawful Construction whatsoever.

THE Predictions concerning the Messiah, were designed to be an Evidence of Force enough to persuade the Careful and Considerate, but not to affect the Negligent, or to compel the Obstinate; they were so contrived, as to be sufficient Notes

of Diſtinction to know the Meſſiah by at his Coming, and reaſonable Grounds of ſuch a Faith as God required from them who lived under theſe Revelations before his Coming.

The right Way of coming to the Knowledge of him, is not by ſeparate and particular Paſſages, but by the Connection of the whole, the exact Coincidence and intire Agreement of all the Prophecies concerning him laid together.

The Appearance of the Son of God in the World was very ſurpriſing, and it could not be thought, that any one who made ſuch Pretences, ſhould find Credit, unleſs the World had beforehand been prepared to expect him, and had ſome infallible Marks and Characters whereby to know him when he came; and this was the principal End of all the Types and Prophecies of the Law, to contain the Promiſes and Predictions of the Meſſiah, and the Characters whereby to know him.

As it is not in the Power of any Man to chuſe a Time to be born in, no more than to chuſe to himſelf an illuſtrious Fore-runner; or to chuſe a certain Place in the World, and a certain Family to be born in, or to have a Virgin to his Mother; thoſe Characters have been an Hindrance to all thoſe who, ſince our Saviour, have pretended to the Title of Meſſiah, that might reaſonably do it.

Moses, *Deuteron.* xviii. 15, 18, 19. ſpeaks expreſly of the Meſſiah, and giveth ſtrict Charge to hearken to what he ſhould command; now what Occaſion was there for this, if he had no more in Commiſſion than *Moſes* had, and were to command nothing more or leſs than *Moſes* had done, if he were only to reinforce what *Moſes* commanded? That was the Buſineſs of leſſer Prophets, and would make him leſs than *Moſes*; but beſide *Moſes*, we have the joint Voice of all

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the Prophets, which do in expreſs Terms declare, that the Meſſiah would make great Changes from what *Moſes* commanded, and introduce a much more glorious State in the Church, as in *Iſa.* lxv. 17. lxvi. 22. *Jerem.* iii. 16. xxxi. 31, 32. *Pſalm* xl. 6, 7.

THOSE Places of Scripture, which the Apoſtles apply to Chriſt out of the Old Teſtament, were at that Time by the *Jews* themſelves, to whom they cite them, underſtood of the Meſſias; they always ſuppoſed, that whatever was great and excellent among them, was but a faint and imperfect Reſemblance of that Glory and Excellency, which was to be in its full Perfection and Accompliſhment under the Meſſiah.

HAD the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians impoſed a falſe or controverted Senſe on the Predictions confeſſedly belonging to the Meſſiah, the Attempt had been as impertinent, the Affront to Men's Reaſon as inſolent and daring, the Event as fruitleſs, nay as fatal to their Cauſe, as it would have been to urge ſuch Predictions, as were not acknowledged to belong at all to the Meſſiah.

IF the Apoſtles cannot be ſuppoſed with any Propriety of Reaſoning, or Proſpect of Succeſs, to offer, or indeed to be heard in the Allegation of Prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, which the *Jewiſh* Church at that Time did not agree to be intended of him; if this Agreement were ſo general, that even figurative Alluſions from thoſe Prophecies were uſed as Inſinuations familiar, and well underſtood by the common People, that the Perſon ſo characteriſed was the Meſſiah; if all the Prophecies thus alledged, appear even yet by ſome or other of their moſt eminent Doctors to be interpreted of the Meſſiah; and if the Diſagreement of the preſent and ancient Synagogue may be very fairly accounted for; then

the Christian Interpretation of Prophecies, as to the Ground of it, is vindicated.

The *Jews* own, that Jesus was, and that their Fathers have put him to Death; they do not deny any Circumstance of his Life, of his Ministry, of his Death, but those which may make him appear to be the Son of God.

The Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of its Temple, did not happen only to punish the *Jews* for their Crime, in putting the Messiah to Death; but also to take away from them all possible Pretences, to believe that the Messiah, who was to appear in that Temple, was not yet come.

There are such clear and precise Oracles in the Books of the Old Testament, especially in that of *Daniel*, that *Porphyry*, the mortal Enemy of Christians, was forc'd to say, that the Book of *Daniel* had been forg'd since the Time of *Antiochus*, sirnamed *Illustrious*; a ridiculous Fancy! since that Prophecy had been translated into *Greek*, above a hundred Years before, and was not only in the Hands of the *Jews*, but also of the *Egyptians*; mortal Enemies to the *Jewish* Nation.

It is to be observed, that as the Oracles mentioned by the Heathens, were only upon Matters of no great Concern to the People; it does not appear, that those where, it is said, those Oracles were pronounced, did much concern themselves for their Preservation; whereas we find the *Jewish* Nation so persuaded of the Truth of the Oracles committed to them, that nothing yet has been able to oblige them to leave off the Reading of them, notwithstanding their Disputes with Christians, who use them in spight of the Synagogue, to make good their Pretensions.

None but the *Jews* can be suspected to have forged the Oracles of the Books of the Old Testament;

ſtament; but being ſtrongly prepoſſeſs'd, ſince their Return from the Captivity, that the Meſſiah was to be a great temporal King, it is impoſſible that they ſhould have ſuppoſed Oracles, which poſitively ſay, that the Meſſiah was to be put to Death after a very odious Manner; and the calling of the *Gentiles* to partake of the Benefits of the Covenant of God with the People of *Iſrael*, being the moſt abominable Thing in the World to the *Jews*, how is it conceivable that the *Jews* ſhould ſuppoſe ſo many Oracles ſo contrary to their Prejudices?

Some Libertines ſay, That the Apoſtles have made lucky Alluſions to ſome notable Paſſages of ancient Authors, which ſeemed to be the Prediction of thoſe Events they relate; much after the ſame Manner as *Nonnus* relates the Hiſtory of the Goſpel with *Homerus*'s Verſes, and as *Prudentius* hath made a Rhapſody out of *Virgilius*'s, containing the ſame Goſpel, tho' neither *Homerus* nor *Virgilius* had in View the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion; upon which Account, 'tis to be obſerved, that the *Jews* themſelves, in our Saviour's Time, referr'd to the Meſſiah the ſame Oracles we apply to him; otherwiſe, the Apoſtles, who have merely endeavoured to prove by Particulars, that Jeſus is the Meſſiah, becauſe, in him are found the Characters aſcribed to the Meſſiah by the Prophets, ought to have eſtabliſhed in the firſt Place, that thoſe Oracles related to the Meſſiah, which they have ſuppoſed as a matter of Fact, averred and acknowledged; and it appears by our Saviour's Explication of the cx^th^ *Pſalm*, that tho' the *Jews* could not ſolve the Difficulty which naturally appears in theſe Words, *the Lord ſaid unto my Lord, ſit thou on my right Hand*; nevertheleſs, they referr'd that Oracle to the Meſſiah, without looking for any other Perſon

ſon whom they might apply it to, as they do now a Days.

If it be demanded, how it comes to paſs that the Prophets prepare the *Jews* to ſo much Glory and Greatneſs from the Meſſiah, ſince at his Coming they were to be rejected from the Covenant? The ready Anſwer is, that theſe Promiſes are made by the Holy Ghoſt to *Iſrael* according to the Spirit, and not to *Iſrael* according to the Fleſh; now *Iſrael*, according to the Spirit, is made up of all thoſe who are the Children of *Abraham* by Faith, whether they be deſcended from that Patriarch, or from any other.

Prophecies ought not to be expreſſed in ſuch clear Terms, as to give Occaſion to Men to avoid, or change the Event; if you tell the very Inſtant of the Birth of Chriſt, you facilitate to *Herod* the Execution of his wicked Deſign; if you denote the Perſon of the Meſſiah, ſo that he might not be miſtaken in him; if you tell, that he is the Son of *Mary*, eſpouſed to a *Carpenter*, called *Joſeph*, and that he lieth at ſuch an Hour in a Manger, and in ſuch a Houſe in *Bethlehem*, but that at ſuch a Time he is to be carried into *Egypt*; you make it more eaſy for *Herod* to ſatisfy his cruel Ambition, or you lay the Wiſdom of God under the Neceſſity to find out other Means to ſave his Son, than thoſe he had reſolved upon, or had been already foretold and determined by the Prophets; it is then neceſſary, that Prophecies ſhould be covered with ſome Veil before their Accompliſhment.

The Term Prophet, commonly denotes a Perſon who foretels future Events; but if we duly mind the Language of Scripture, a Prophet is any Perſon whatſoever, who announceth the ſecret Things of God, whether they be paſt, preſent, or future. Thus *John* the Baptiſt foretold nothing,

thing, and yet is called the greateſt among the Prophets; a Prophet therefore, properly ſpeaking, is the Meſſenger of God unto Men.

CHAP. XIII.

Some Proofs of the Meſſiah's being come.

IT is manifeſtly inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of God, when he meant to give Marks and Characters, by which the Meſſiah might be certainly known, to give only ſuch as might belong to another Perſon no leſs than to him; and it is no leſs inconſiſtent with his Goodneſs, that his Providence ſhould ever permit, that all the Marks and Characters of the true Meſſiah ſhould meet together in an Impoſtor; becauſe, by this, Mankind muſt have lain under an inevitable Neceſſity of being cheated in a Matter of the greateſt Conſequence to their eternal Salvation.

THE Family of *David* is at this Day wholly unknown; among the *Jews* there are no more lawful Prieſts to obſerve the Primogeniture, to examine the Marks of Virginity; tho' according to the Intention of God, all theſe Laws ſeem to have been given to cauſe the Meſſiah to be certainly known.

To comfort the *Jews* in a Captivity, which was not to laſt above Seventy Years, ſeveral Men appear, who giving themſelves out to be ſent from God, foretel the *Jews* Deliverance; but ſince the laſt Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, there is not amongſt them ſo much as one Prophecy owned

owned by them, to comfort them in that great Diſperſion, whoſe Cauſe they are ignorant of; and to foretel their Reſtoration: That is ſomewhat ſurprizing, and I do not know whether the Unbelievers have duly conſidered it.

SINCE we find no-where in the Prophets, the Prediction of ſo long, and ſo ſad a Deſolation as that of the *Jews* hath been for above Sixteen hundred Years, that ſhould happen before the Coming of the Meſſiah; and that, on the contrary, all the Prophets have promiſed the *Jews* that Coming after the Reſtoration, from the Captivity of *Babylon*, without mentioning any Delay or Interruption; 'tis a certain Demonſtration that the Meſſiah is come.

THE Captivity of *Babylon* was nothing, if compared either for the Miſery or Duration with the preſent State of the *Jews*; yet God cauſed it to be foretold often, to the end that People ſhould not fancy that it was contrary to his Promiſes; all the Prophets have handled that Subject: Why did they not ſpeak a Word of this long Deſolation, but that the Deſign of God was accompliſh'd, and his Work finiſh'd, ſince he made Salvation come out of *Sion*, to ſpread itſelf to the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth, as he had promiſed?

'TIS neither poſſible nor conceivable, that the Prophets ſhould always join, or rather confound, this new and everlaſting Covenant they ſpeak of, with the Return from the Captivity of *Babylon*, if between that Reſtoration, and the Publication of the new Covenant, there ought to have happened a ſecond Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and of the Temple, and a third Captivity incomparably longer, harder and heavier than that of *Egypt* and *Babylon* were.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Concerning the Jewiſh *Law.*

AS God in his own high Wiſdom hath placed the Twilight between the Night and the Morning to ſecure our Sight, leſt our weak Eyes ſhould be dazzled by a too ſudden Irruption of the broad Day's Glory, ſo did he deal with the *Jews*; he thought it not convenient immediately to poſt them out of utter Darkneſs into perfect Light, but firſt interpoſes a leſs pure Religion between the Heathen and the Goſpel State.

MERELY to comply with the *Jews* in what was innocent, and to reſtrain them in what was hurtful and idolatrous, the Eternal Word was fain to impoſe a vaſt Number of poſitive Laws upon them; which contained nothing but what was purely indifferent, and might have been done or undone, without any Prejudice to the eternal Rules of Goodneſs.

No ſufficient Reaſon can be given, why Beaſts ſhould be ſlain in Sacrifice, before they were uſed, as far as it appears, for Food by Men; or how it ſhould be imagined, that God would accept of the Blood of any Creature, or be pleaſed with the taking from it that Life which he had given it; or why a peculiar Efficacy towards the Expiation of Sin was ſuppoſed to be in the Blood; unleſs it had been upon the Account of the Blood of Chriſt, which was typically prefigured by the Blood of Beaſts.

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THE Time for the Duration of the *Jewiſh* Law and Government being expired, all Promiſes made to them as a diſtinct People and Nation muſt be expired with it.

IF it be ſaid, that the *Moſaical* Law was to endure for ever, that Expreſſion is uſed to denote the Continuance of any Thing which was not deſigned for ſome particular Occaſion or Seaſon only, but was to laſt as long as the Nature and general Deſign of it's Inſtitution would admit, as appears by ſeveral Places in Scripture,

As all the legal Obſervances were for no other Uſe than to diſtinguiſh the People of the *Jews* from all other Nations in the World, and ſo to make the *Jews* know the Meſſiah who was to be born from among them; 'tis an eaſy Matter to perceive, that all theſe Ceremonies ought naturally to be aboliſhed, after the Meſſiah's coming into the World; and that therefore, there is no Contradiction between *Moſes*, who hath eſtabliſhed thoſe Ceremonies, and the Apoſtles, who have aboliſhed them.

The *Jews* making up but one Body with the *Gentiles*, it follows, that they ought to quit their Ceremonies, becauſe they ſerved only for a Diſtinction between them and the other Nations; or elſe we muſt ſay that all the other Nations of the World ought to receive the Ceremonies of the *Jews*, ſince that making up together but one Church, they could not have a different Worſhip, and different Laws; but it was not poſſible that all the Nations ſhould practice the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies, nor the *Levitical* Worſhip; ſince one ſingle Temple, one ſingle Altar, could not be ſufficient for that Purpoſe, and that on the other Hand it was impoſſible, that the Inhabitants of *Europa*, *Africa*, and of the furthermoſt Parts

of

of *Asia*, (besides others) should go at least three times a Year to *Jerusalem*.

All the Ceremonies of the Law had a special Relation to those Benefits God had bestowed upon that People, to their Deliverance from *Egypt*, to their inhabiting the Land of *Canaan*; so that all these Ceremonies could be practised but by the *Israelites* only.

By saying the Law to have been a Type of the Gospel, the Meaning is not, that this can be made good of every particular Branch, much less of every one alike, but that there is such a Correspondence in the main Substance and general Design of it.

Before the Death of Christ, the ritual Law was in full Force; from thence to the Destruction of the *Jewish* Polity and Temple, and the sufficient Publication of the Gospel, it was in a wasting Condition, dead at the Root, but not quite withered above; Men were free, but they did not know it: at this Time it was indifferent, but not unlawful; and so a proper Subject for Christian Prudence to act as every one should find most expedient, and not to despise or censure one another for observing or not observing it; but in the Subversion of the Temple and holy City, and the *Jews* Exile from a Land to which the Exercise of its most important Services were strictly confined, it was quite dead and abolished.

There is a tacit Condition implied in all Laws, of a ritual and positive Nature, that is, provided the Observance of them be not to the Hindrance and Prejudice of any Duty, which is of a higher and better Nature.

The Grace whereby good Men were assisted before or under the Law, was a Branch of the Gospel Dispensation then in Force, and a Privilege

vilege not properly belonging to the Sacrifices then offered, but to the Sacrifice of that Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World, of the whole World, and all the Ages of it; becauſe ſlain not actually indeed till the Fulneſs of Time, but virtually from the very Foundation of the World; and ſo a Propitiation having a Retroſpect to them that went before, as well as looking forward to them that have lived ſince the Time of ſhedding his Blood upon the Altar of the Croſs.

If the moral Law cannot be made void, 'tis becauſe its firſt Foundation is the Holineſs of God, which is immutable; but Ceremonies having no other Support but the Will of God, nothing can hinder him to put an End to theſe Ordinances.

It cannot be denied but that there are in the Law of *Moſes*, and in the Writings of the Prophets, ſeveral Expreſſions, which may be referr'd to the Reſurrection and the Life Eternal; but before the Light of the Goſpel, afore we certainly knew the Will of God, I ſay that thoſe Expreſſions were not clear nor poſitive enough to maintain by themſelves, and after an uncontroulable Manner, theſe great Doctrines, which the Goſpel hath fully diſcovered.

Tho' the Prophets deſcribe God's Bleſſings foretold by them, under the Notion of a worldly Peace and Happineſs; however, they tell ſo many Things inconſiſtent with the State of Nature, that one muſt needs explain them ſpiritually to give them a reaſonable Senſe: Sometimes they tell us, that there will be no more Night; ſometimes, that the moſt dry Deſarts will be changed into Rivers; ſometimes, that the wildeſt Beaſts ſhall have no more Fierceneſs, nor the moſt dangerous creeping Things any Venom; they tell us,

us, that the Gates of *Jeruſalem* ſhall be ſhut no more; and that the Wicked ſhall not go through *Jeruſalem*, &c.

In the Oracles of the Prophets, there is a ſort of Confuſion between the Type and the Thing typified; ſo that in the very ſame Diſcourſe, there will be ſome Things which ſhall agree only with the Type, and not to the Thing typified; others agreeing with the Thing typified, and not with the Type; and others at laſt agreeing with both: So oftentimes, the Prophets ſpeaking of the ſpiritual Deliverance, confound it with the temporal Deliverance of the *Jews* from the Captivity of *Babylon*: Chriſt hath followed that prophetick Style in his Predictions, *Matth.* xxiv. and in other Places, concerning the Ruin of *Jeruſalem*, with the Vocation of the *Gentiles* that accompanied it, and the laſt Day of Judgment; becauſe in reality, the firſt was the Type of the other.

In Point of divine Bleſſings, the Corporal are the Shadows of the Spiritual; 'tis what St. *Paul* has obſerved, *Heb.* x. *The Law had a Shadow of good Things to come, and not the very Image of the Things.*

CHAP. XV.

Of the GOSPEL.

THE Law is the Goſpel typified and foretold, the Goſpel is the Law fulfilled and perfected; as much then as the Subſtance is preferable to its Shadow, Accompliſhment to Promiſes, Preſence to Diſtance, Poſſeſſion to Hope,

Clearneſs to Obſcurity, and Plainneſs to ambiguous Expreſſions; ſo juſt, ſo great a Pre-eminence, is due to the Evangelical above the legal Diſpenſation.

The Goſpel is the Revelation of the laſt and moſt perfect Will of God, concerning the everlaſting Salvation of Men, and the Means of attaining it.

The Goſpel, in Oppoſition to the Law, is ſtiled Grace, not as it quits us of our Obligation to worſhip God, or deſtroys the Precepts of the Law ſo far as they bind us, but as it taketh away the Rigour of the Law.

The Manner and Meaſures of revealing the divine Will to Mankind, have differed very much according to the different Ages and Conditions of the World, and particularly with regard to the Meſſiah, who was the Expectation of all Ages. Hence is the Goſpel ſtyled a Myſtery, which from the Beginning of the World had been hid, but is now made manifeſt to the Saints; not ſo hid at any Time, that Men had no Signification, no Knowledge at all of it; but theſe Diſcoveries are now explicit, and bright, and full, which were before confuſed and dark, and ſeen behind a Veil,

Till the bright Diſcovery of eternal Bleſſedneſs was made by the Goſpel, it was above the Deſires and Hopes of ſinful Man. *Cœlum homo nec optare poterat ex ignorantia, nec ſperare ex propriæ miſeriæ conſcientia.*

The Goſpel hath not relaxed the Strictneſs of the Law, as 'tis the Rule of Life, but as it was the Condition of obtaining Life; ſincere Obedience is accepted by that gracious Covenant, where the legal Perfection is wanting; but that is indiſpenſably required of all.

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THE *Rabbies* among the *Jews* would ſcarce inſtruct any but for great Rewards; the ordinary and poorer Sort of People they had in great Contempt: In old Times, the Prophets were only ſent to the Kings and Princes of the People; but our Saviour came to preach glad Tidings to the Poor.

THIS laſt Age of the Goſpel, is that which the Scripture, by way of Eminency, calls *the Age*; thoſe that went before, were conſtantly called αἰῶνες, *the Ages*, in the plural Number.

As the Decalogue was given to repair the Defacings, and renew the Impreſſions of the natural Law, ſo the Precepts of the Goſpel were deſigned to revive and illuſtrate both.

WHEN our Saviour ſaith, that he is not come to ſend Peace, but a Sword, we are not to underſtand of the natural Tendency of his Religion, but of the accidental Event and Effect of it, through the Malice and Perverſeneſs of Men; but when he ſaith, that he is not come to deſtroy Men's Lives, but to ſave them, he ſpeaks of the proper Intention and Deſign of his coming.

THE Goſpel bids us be perfect, but it bids us withal not be diſcouraged at our involuntary Imperfections; it preſents us with a ſtrict Lawgiver, but, at the ſame time, with a gracious Judge; it chargeth us to commit no Sin, but it leaves room for Repentance, when we have ſinned; and thoſe who cannot ſtand a Judgment extreme in marking what has been done amiſs, it ſupports, with a Propitiation for Offences, and Mercy through Faith in the Blood of a crucified Redeemer.

THERE are other Goſpel Motives of Obedienc, beſides Rewards and Puniſhments, ſuch as the great Love of God in giving his Son for us; the great Love of Chriſt in giving himſelf a Sa-

crifice for us; which is a powerful Obligation on us to live to him who died for us; and the powerful Aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit, to work in us both to will and to do, which renders our Obedience both poſſible and eaſy.

Those who profeſs never ſo great Veneration for the New Teſtament, but have little Eſteem for any Part of the Old, underſtand neither the one nor the other as they ought; they refer all along to each other, and muſt ſtand or fall together; for the one is but a Draught, as it were, or Model of the other, all Things being, though obſcurely, yet ſufficiently in the Old Teſtament, which are fully and lively expreſſed in the New; the Faith in the Meſſiah to come, and the Principles of Religion and Morality, had been delivered down from the Beginning by *Adam* and *Noah* to their Poſterity; and when *Moſes*, by God's Direction and Appointment, gave Laws to the Children of *Iſrael*, the End and Deſign of theſe Laws was the Preſervation of this Faith and Practice among them.

The Old Teſtament is the Promiſe of the New, and the New is the Accompliſhment of the Old; but how, will you ſay, was the Goſpel promiſed before? I anſwer, that it had been promiſed, 1*ſt*, By all the expreſs Oracles which foretold a new Covenant. 2*dly*, By all thoſe that promiſed the Meſſiah. 3*dly*, By all the legal Types which contained in themſelves the Promiſes of the Things typified by them. 4*thly*, By all the legal Oeconomy which prepared Men for the Goſpel, and by that very thing promiſed it, and in that Rank are the Severities of Juſtice. 5*thly*, By all the Revelations of Grace and Mercy, which were the Subſtance and Bud of the Goſpel, and conſequently, promiſed a more particular Explication of it.

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The Goſpel of Chriſt is the Truth of Oracles, ſince he hath verified them; it is the Truth of the Promiſes, ſince he hath made them good; the Truth of the Types, ſince he is their Original; the Truth of the Ceremonies, ſince he is their End; and when St. *Paul* hath ſaid, *Chriſt is the End of the Law for Righteouſneſs, to every one that believeth*, 'tis the ſame thing as if he had ſaid that he is the Truth of it.

Let us not imagine, that Chriſt is come into the World only to take away the Puniſhment, and to leave the Sin; he is come to deſtroy both; and it may be confidently ſaid, that he is rather come to deſtroy Sin than the Puniſhment; the Creature only is concerned in the Puniſhment, but both the Creator and Creature are affected with the Sin; it diſhonours the one, and offends the other.

The Goſpel carrieth with it Proofs of its Truth and Divinity; the Holineſs of its Laws, and of that Worſhip preſcribed by it, the Excellency of its Promiſes, the Miracles which were made by Chriſt, by his Apoſtles, and by thoſe on whom they laid their Hands, the Blood of ſo many Martyrs, confirm its Truth after an authentick and an unqueſtionable Manner; ſo that all the Arguments proving to the *Jews* the Divinity of the Law and Prophets, ſpeak ſtill more ſtrongly for the Divinity of the Goſpel: The perfect and complete Relation of the Law and the Prophets to the Goſpel, ſets this Truth, in reſpect of the *Jews*, beyond all Doubt and Exception; whatſoever the Scripture of the Old Teſtament had ſaid of the Meſſiah, of the Time and Place of his Birth, of the Qualities of his Mother, of his Actions, of his Sufferings, of the Circumſtances of his Death, all ſuit with Chriſt; what the Prophets have ſo many Times foretold

of the Nature, Extent, and Duration of his Kingdom, of the new Covenant, of the Quality of his Subjects, all that is plain being explained by the Goſpel; whereas, in the *Jews* Opinion, there is Darkneſs every-where with impenetrable Difficulties: Jeſus then is the true promiſed Meſſiah; and ſince he is the Meſſiah, we muſt believe that he is God, ſince he ſaid he was, and his Apoſtles have taught the ſame.

To believe in the Meſſiah, muſt at leaſt import believing him a Teacher ſent from God; and conſequently, a Belief of all, which either he delivered concerning himſelf; or others ſent by him, acted and atteſted to by the ſame Spirit, were commiſſioned to deliver concerning him; and if the Writers of the Books of the New Teſtament, were all of them Perſons of this Character; then muſt the Rule and Meaſure of our Faith, extend to the Whole of what they have left us about this Matter.

If there be nothing in the Goſpel, and the Deſign of our Redemption, but what is wiſe and reaſonable, and exceedingly for our Benefit and Advantage, why ſhould any Man be ſo averſe to the Belief of it? Why ſhould Unbelief be counted a Piece of Wit? Is it Wit to ſet ourſelves againſt Reaſon, and to oppoſe our beſt Intereſt? 'Tis Wickedneſs, and Prejudice, and Inconſiderateneſs, which disbelieveth the Goſpel.

'Tis true, indeed, that the Wiſdom of God's Word, is not, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, the Wiſdom of this World. The Scripture teacheth us not the Arts of undermining Governments, defrauding and circumventing our Brethren; but it teacheth us that which would tend much more even to our temporal Felicity; and as Reaſon prompts us to aſpire to Happineſs, ſo it muſt acknowledge, that is the higheſt Wiſdom, which teacheth us to attain it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

Our Faith is grounded on right Reaſon.

REASON is that Power, whereby Men are enabled to draw clear Inferences from evident Principles: So by the Reaſonableneſs of the Precepts of the Goſpel, is nothing to be underſtood, but that there are thoſe ſelf-evident Principles, from whence what the Goſpel requires may be inferred to be our Duty, altho' God had never declared his Mind concerning them.

No Man can believe, but upon ſome Reaſon or other; and to believe without any Reaſon, or againſt Reaſon, is to make Faith unreaſonable, and Infidelity reaſonable.

REASON is the Faculty whereby Revelations are to be diſcerned; or, to uſe the Scripture Phraſe, whereby we are to judge what Spirits are of God, and what not.

OUR Faith in religious Matters is divine upon Account of its Object, the Being and Revelation of God; of its Motives, external, as the miraculous Demonſtrations of divine Power and Approbation; or internal, as the Aſſiſtances of divine Grace, which diſpoſes our Minds to conſider and believe: But otherwiſe, the laſt Reſult of all Belief muſt terminate in every Man's own Reaſon: It maketh no Difference, whether Men aſſent upon the Teſtimony of their Senſes, when Reaſon is made the Judge of the Reality and Divinity of the Miracles they ſee; or, whether

upon the Tradition and Report of ſuch Miracles as they ſee not, when the Reaſon is made Judge of the Validity of that Teſtimony; for this, to Perſons abſent, and in future Ages, is all that can be expected, and ſupplieth the Place of ſuch ocular Demonſtration, as the firſt Reporter had of the extraordinary Preſence and Atteſtation of Almighty God.

The Chriſtian Revelation alloweth and proves the divine Authority of the *Jewiſh*; the *Jewiſh* preſuppoſeth the Principles of natural Religion; and theſe again the firſt Notions of Good and Evil, which are common to, and grow up with all Mankind. We are not much to wonder notwithſtanding, if all Mankind do not improve thoſe firſt Notions equally; and leſs, if all who allow what they call Natural, do not confeſs Revealed Religion; and leſs yet, if all who have ſubmitted to the Revelation of *Moſes*, do not embrace that of Jeſus Chriſt. Sloth and Luxury, Prepoſſeſſion and Pride, worldly Intereſt, and vicious Habits, may darken the Mind, and damp the Man's Endeavours, and perſuade him to ſtop ſhort, and to think himſelf very well where he is already. But, would every one be at the Pains to purſue the firſt Dictates of Reaſon through all their Conſequences, it would appear, that even theſe have ſcarcely ſtronger Evidence of Truth, than the Chriſtian Revelation; becauſe the Chriſtian Motives of Aſſent, when driven up to their true Head, terminate all at laſt in the firſt Principles of Reaſon, and common Senſe. The Miracles of Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles, are an Appeal to theſe in the Perſons who ſaw, and heard, and reported them; and Tradition, well circumſtantiated, is an Appeal to the ſame in all who receive thoſe Reports at this Day.

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There is a mighty Difference between embracing Doctrines above Reason, and embracing them without Reason: It is not the Condition of the Thing revealed, but the Certainty of the Revelation, that maketh the proper Subject of our Inquiry, and is the real and immediate Motive of Assent in Matters of divine Faith.

He that declares a Thing to be above Reason, implieth no more thereby, than that he doth not comprehend or see how it can be; but he that pronounceth a Thing contrary to Reason, implieth, that he perceiveth either such an Inconsistence in the Thing itself, or such an Incongruity with other certain and acknowledged Truths, as plainly shew him that it cannot be.

'Tis true, all Assent ought to be built upon a clear and distinct Perception, and that of Faith must be so too; but with this Difference, that in other Cases, the Perception of the Thing must be clear; and in this Case, the Perception of the Evidence must be clear; and so it is, for can we have a clearer Perception of any Thing, than we have of this Axiom, into which all Faith is at last resolved; That perfect Wisdom cannot be deceived, and perfect Truth cannot deceive us?

Men think they deny their own Reason, when they assent to the Revelation of God in such Things as their own Reason could neither have discovered, nor is able to give the Reason of: Whereas, in this Case, a Man is so far from denying his own Reason, that he does that which is most agreeable to it; for what more reasonable, than to believe what we are sufficiently assured is revealed to us by God, who can never be deceived himself, nor deceive us?

God never offers any thing to any Man's Belief, that plainly contradicts the natural and essential Notions of his Mind; because this would

would be for God to deſtroy his own Workmanſhip, and to impoſe that upon the Underſtanding of Man, which, whilſt it remains what it is, it cannot poſſibly admit? For Inſtance, we cannot imagine, that God ſhould reveal to any Man any thing that plainly contradicts the eſſential Perfections of the divine Nature; for ſuch a Revelation can no more be ſuppoſed to be from God, than a Revelation from God, that there is no God, which is a downright Contradiction.

No Argument is ſufficient to prove a Doctrine or Revelation to be from God, which is not clearer and ſtronger than the Difficulties and Objections againſt it; becauſe all Aſſent is grounded upon Evidence, and the ſtrongeſt and cleareſt Evidence always carrieth it; ſo, though a Perſon work a Miracle, which ordinarily is a good Evidence that he is ſent by God; yet, if the Doctrine he brings, be plainly contrary to thoſe natural Notions which we have of God, this is a better Objection againſt the Truth of his Doctrine, than the other is a Proof of it.

THERE is no more Reaſon why we ſhould ſubmit our Will to God, by our Obedience to his Laws, than there is, why we ſhould captivate our Underſtanding by Faith; by the one, we acknowledge him for a Maſter who hath a Right to command; and by the other, we own that he is perfectly true; and that we need not fear to be deceived, by receiving what he tells us.

FAITH hath two Sorts of Enemies, thoſe who deny all, and thoſe who will know all.

THE true Religion cannot carry us, but where right Reaſon tells us we muſt go; they are both but one and the ſame Thing; right Reaſon is an inward Language of God; and Religion is a Language by which God ſenſibly ſpeaks to us in the Scriptures.

To

To adore God as the ſupreme Being, the Creator of the Univerſe, the Author and Preſerver of Life; to know the Dependence we are in from that ſovereign Diſpoſer of Life and Death; to know how indiſpenſably we ſtand in Need of his Protection and Aſſiſtance; to come before that great God into that Nothing again, from whence he hath taken us; to praiſe, to invoke, to bleſs him; it is the Evangelical Worſhip grounded upon Reaſon, and thoſe Notions it gives us of the Greatneſs of God, and of our Baſeneſs. To have Recourſe to his Mercy, with an humble Confeſſion of our Sins, to obtain Pardon; to beg for his Aſſiſtance and Grace, that we may follow his Commandments, and obey his Laws; 'tis what Chriſt hath taught us, and it is what the Light of Nature preſcribes us.

Even in thoſe things relating to our Faith, we may draw negative Arguments from the Principles of right Reaſon, to reject thoſe Errors which creep into the Church under Pretence of Faith; for what is repugnant to Reaſon, can never be Matter of Faith.

The firſt Quality of a Chriſtian is to be a rational Man; it is not poſſible, that one who does not know how to uſe his Reaſon, and who hath not common Senſe, ſhould make a right Judgment of ſpiritual Things, ſhould reſiſt his Paſſions, lay aſide his Prejudices, and follow conſtantly the Rules of his Duty.

Since our Faith muſt be a free and voluntary Aſſent, upon ſuch Motives as are ſufficient to ſatisfy an honeſt Mind, but not to compel either an obſtinate Infidel, or ſelf-deceived Hypocrite, God did not think fit ſo to ſecure our Faith, as to leave it impoſſible for us to err damnably; and indeed, if he had, it would have been no Virtue in us to believe ſavingly; for what Virtue

is

is it for a Man to do that which it is impoſſible for him not to do? It is ſufficient that we cannot err damnably in our Faith, without ſome damnable Faults in our Wills.

All Doctrines, plainly contrary to the natural Notions which Men have of God, and plainly derogating from the Goodneſs, Juſtice, or any other Perfection of God, are certainly falſe and to be rejected, what Authority ſoever they pretend to.

If all the external Motives will not make one ſufficient Argument to perſuade us to aſſent to the Scripture, how could they render the unbelieving *Jews* inexcuſable, as our Saviour ſeveral times aſſured them they would? Nay, how then could he marvel (as we read he did) at their Unbelief?

CHAP. XVII.

Concerning the Myſteries of Religion.

It is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould command and reveal many Things, the Natures and Reaſons of which we may not be able to comprehend; this muſt be granted by every Man who believeth God to be infinitely wiſe, but does not think himſelf to be ſo, and acknowledgeth God's Sovereignty over him; and yet this is the utmoſt that, upon a due Examination, many of the Objections againſt the Authority of the Scriptures amount to; that there are ſeveral things in them, of which ſome Men think no clear

clear Account can be given; and others, which ſeem to them unworthy of God.

Christianity has ſome Myſteries in it ſtill, whoſe Depths we are not able to fathom; but 'tis not becauſe Chriſt hath not revealed them, but becauſe our Underſtandings are incapable of comprehending them: Such are the Doctrines of the holy Trinity, the Incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour, and the hypoſtatical Union of the divine and human Nature in him; nor indeed is it much to be wondered at, that we, who with all our Wit and Reaſon, are not able to explicate the Myſteries of a Mite or Flea, of a Plant, or a Stone, or any of thoſe innumerable Things that are before us, ſhould not be able to underſtand ſuch incomprehenſible, to order ſuch infinite, or define ſuch ineffable Things: But tho' we cannot comprehend the Modes, nor underſtand the ſtrict Philoſophy of them; yet, if we would but ſtrip them out of their falſe Diſguiſes, into their original Plainneſs and Simplicity, we might doubtleſs eaſily diſentangle them them from all Repugnancy and Contradiction; which is ſufficient to render them rationally credible, they being contained in that excellent Religion, whoſe Truth is demonſtrated by ſuch abundant Evidence; but, perhaps, the clear Diſcovery of thoſe Doctrines is reſerved for the future State; and then, it may be, we may as fully underſtand them, as the believing *Jews*, after the Coming of Chriſt, did thoſe other Doctrines of the Goſpel, which before were all Myſteries to them.

The greateſt Myſteries in the Chriſtian Religion, ſo far as they are revealed, and ſo far as they are required to be known by us, contain no inexplicable Difficulties: But if we will needs know more of the Myſteries of Religion than is revealed,

revealed, and more than is required to be known, no wonder if we meet with Difficulties. What is meant, for Inſtance, by the Doctrine of the Trinity, is capable of being very well underſtood, as the Oppoſers of this Doctrine muſt own; unleſs they will confeſs, that they oppoſe they know not what: He that ſays a Thing is not true, knows what it is which he pretends not to be true, if he underſtands what he ſaith: The Thing then is known, though there be Difficulty in the Explication; but the Explication concerns the Manner of Exiſtence, not the Truth of it; for that may certainly be, and we may certainly know it to be, which yet we know not how it ſhould be.

The Perſons of Men are diſtinct Men, as well as diſtinct Perſons; but this is no Ground for us to affirm, that the Perſons in the divine Nature are diſtinct Gods; becauſe the divine Nature is acknowledged to be infinite, and incomprehenſible; and when we ſpeak of three Perſons in it, we do not mean ſuch three Perſons, as three ſeveral Men are: We learn from the Scriptures, that there are three Perſons in the Deity, which bear that Relation to each other, which is beſt expreſſed by the Terms of Father, Son, and holy Spirit; but the Terms of Father, Son, and Spirit, are not therefore ſo to be underſtood as they are in human Relations.

Whoever will oppoſe the Doctrine of the holy Trinity, muſt prove, that the three Perſons of the Trinity, cannot be as really diſtinct as the Perſons of three Men are, tho' they are not ſuch Perſons as the Perſons of Men; and to prove this, he muſt underſtand the Nature of God, as well as he underſtands the Nature of Man; for otherwiſe, he can never be able to prove, that three

three divine Perſons may not be one God, tho' three human Perſons cannot be one Man.

Whether the one moſt ſimple and uncompounded Nature of God may not be communicated to three eternal Perſons, without either Confuſion of the Perſons, or dividing of the Subſtance, does in no way interfere with the Unity of the Nature; becauſe this very Hypotheſis does ſuppoſe the Unity of the Nature in the ſtricteſt Senſe that is poſſible: And if we ſhould be under great Difficulty (as how can it be otherwiſe) in explaining ſuch an unfathomable Myſtery; yet, can it not infer Polytheiſm upon us, while we are ready to part with all, rather than to admit of that.

Why ſhould the Doctrine of the Trinity be deemed incredible, does it imply a Contradiction? Can they that except againſt it, or againſt the Goſpel Revelation upon the Account of it, ſhew that it is impoſſible it ſhould be true? Can they demonſtrate, that 'tis impoſſible for an infinite and eternal Being to beget a Son in his own Likeneſs, the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon? Or can they ſhew it to be impoſſible, that there ſhould be a third Perſon, proceeding from both theſe.

The Scripture does not ſay, that the one God is three Gods, or that thoſe Three, whom it ſpeaks of as three diſtinct Perſons, aſcribing perſonal Acts to each of them, are nevertheleſs but one ſingle Perſon; it tells us only in general, that thoſe Three are One; but how they are Three, and how they are One, wherein conſiſts their Diſtinction, and wherein their Unity, it ſays not, at leaſt not very plainly; and it is the ſafeſt Courſe in ſuch high Matters, in Matters ſo much too high for us, not to exerciſe ourſelves,

ſelves, nor to pretend to be wiſe above what is written.

Since the Scripture attributes to Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, what we for the better explaining what we, mean in this Matter, take leave to call diſtinct Relations, and perſonal Properties, becauſe peculiar to One, and incommunicable to the other Two; we are juſtified by the Scripture, in believing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, to be three Perſons.

'Tis as abſurd to apply our Principles and Maxims, taken from Things of an inferior Nature, to Things of which we can have no Conception but from Revelation, as it would be for a deaf Man to apply the Notion which he hath of Colours to Sound, or for a blind Man to fancy that there is no ſuch Things as Colours, becauſe he is told they cannot be heard.

Although the particular Matter of any divine Revelation, be ſuch a Thing as we could never have found out by natural Reaſon; it is nevertheleſs credible as a Matter divinely revealed, if it implieth no Contradiction; if it be not contrary to natural Reaſon; if it be not repugnant to a former divine Revelation, that is well atteſted; and if it be a Doctrine worthy of God, that is, if in its true Conſequences it hath no Tendency to encourage Sin, but on the contrary, has a plain Tendency to promote the Practice of Piety and Virtue among Men.

We muſt believe Myſteries in abundance whether we will or no; I mean, there are ſome Truths ſo very plain, even to our Reaſon, that we cannot doubt of them, and yet ſo very high and myſterious, that we can no more fathom them, than we can the Doctrine of the Trinity: I think 'tis very hard that we will not receive an incomprehenſible Doctrine upon the Credit of a very

a very plain and well atteſted divine Revelation, as well as we do, and muſt do the ſame upon the Evidence of natural Reaſon; if we are not able to underſtand even our own Eſſence, and how, by an ineffable Union of Spirit with Matter, the Whole together becomes one Man; is it any Wonder, that by all our ſearching we cannot find out God, that we cannot find out the Almighty to Perfection?

No Wit or Study of Man could ever have found out the myſterious Truths of the Goſpel; but theſe are Diſcoveries for which the World is indebted to the Spirit and Goodneſs of God; he alone could reveal the Depth of his own Counſels, which are no more within the Ken of any human Underſtanding, than the Thoughts and Intentions of a Man's Heart are viſible to any but that Man himſelf.

There is no Truth, but ſome intelligent Being or other does comprehend; but that there ſhould be none above the Comprehenſion of the human Mind, is an Imagination too vain and aſſuming to be cheriſhed by them, who apply their Thoughts to obſerve either the Methods of our Attainments to Knowledge, or the other Creatures, which ſeem to be ſet in diſtinct Claſſes of Nature above us.

As we find Objects, whoſe exceeding Brightneſs is not only uſeleſs, but painful to the Eyes of the Body; why may there not be others too glorioufly dazling and ſtrong for that of the Mind? It is moſt reaſonable to think that God hath dealt his Gifts in ſuch Meaſures as the Uſes and Neceſſities of the Creatures to be ſerved by them require; that he hath ſet Bounds to Mens Underſtandings, as well as to their Senſes, allowing to each a Power of ſuch Perceptions as they have

Occasion for, with Regard to this Life or a better.

The very Obscurity and Unconceivableness of some Things are, tho' not direct, yet accidental and additional Proofs of their being revealed; so far, I mean, as they argue them not possible to be the Product of their Invention, whose Perception they are confessed to transcend.

If the Mysteries of Religion had nothing difficult and seemingly inexplicable, there would be no Difficulty to believe, and Faith would not be a Sacrifice made to God; nay, more than that, Faith would no more be a Gift of God, than the Persuasion that Men have of natural Truths.

That there must of Necessity be something Eternal, must be acknowledged by all who understand what is meant by the Word; even those that are so foolish as to say in their Hearts there is no God, yet must believe something else to be Eternal; they must believe that there always was Something, because if ever there had been Nothing, there never could have been any Thing; for how could any Thing have been produc'd by Nothing? Out of Nothing it might, but then there must have been Something to produce it; we can be certain therefore of nothing, if we are not sure of this, that there is Something Eternal; and yet what apparent Contradiction may one fancy to himself in the Notion of Eternity? For what is Eternal, can never be capable of either a shorter or a longer Duration than it always had; so that Millions of Ages hence, it will not have continued longer than it had done as many Millions of Ages past: And how strange and contradictory does this seem to be, that not only three Ages, and one Age should be the same, but that there should be no Difference between one Hour or Moment, and never so many Ages in respect of Eternity?

Eternity? And there is no avoiding this Difficulty, if a Man be of any Religion, or no Religion, let him but apprehend what is meant by Eternity, and he must own, both that there is such a Thing, and that he is utterly unable to explain it.

We may have sufficient Reason to believe many Things, and yet not be able to solve all the Difficulties that may arise concerning them, as in natural Things we cannot explain the Manner and Conveyance of sensible Objects, through our outward Organs to our Soul, nor the thousandth Part of those Difficulties which are started concerning the Soul itself; yet no Man doubts but that he hath a Soul, that he sees, hears, thinks, reasons, *&c.* So in supernatural Things, who can solve all that may be ask'd concerning the Being and Operations of God; yet all this is no Argument against the Belief of a first Cause, and its essential Perfections, because it is forced upon us by undeniable Reasons.

God, as he is invisible to human Eyes, so is he unfathomable by human Understanding; the Perfection of his Nature, and the Impotency of ours, setting us at too great a Distance to have any clear Perception of him; nay, so far are we from a full Comprehension, that we can discern nothing at all of him, but by his own Light, those Discoveries he has been pleased to make of himself.

'Tis very reasonable that in something we should acknowledge our Ignorance; and there is no Occasion in which it is more becoming or more necessary to own it, than in Matters concerning the Ways of God, since we cannot fully comprehend them, unless we cease to be what we are, or he himself ceaseth to be what he is.

If I do not grant this general Principle, That there are incomprehensible Truths, which are nevertheless most certain, I am not capable of Rea-

ſoning either about Nature or Religion; and if I grant it, the Unconceivableneſs of the Generation of Jeſus Chriſt is no more for me a Reaſon to doubt; I ought only to examine, whether it is poſſible for me to call in Queſtion the Truth of that Myſtery, ſo clearly revealed to me in the Scripture.

Sound Divinity doth conſiſt in ſpeaking with the Scripture, and in going no farther; philoſophizing Divines go out of the Way, at the very firſt Step they pretend to make to ſearch after, and inquire into the Truths of Salvation; ſince they beſtow their Time in endeavouring to comprehend what is incomprehenſible, whereas they ſhould only inſiſt upon what is true.

As the taking away the Freedom of human Will, and making us mere Machines under fatal Tyes and Impulſes, would deſtroy the very Nature of moral Virtue; ſo likewiſe as to Faith, there would be nothing worthy of Praiſe and Recompence in it, if there were left no Poſſibility of Doubting or Denying.

The Word Myſtery hath three different Significations, *1ſt.* It ſignifieth ſomething great, ſublime, and deſerving a profound Meditation: *2dly.* Something hidden under the Cover of another, and where what you ſee, which at firſt ſeems nothing, leads you to the Underſtanding of another that you do not ſee, and which however deſerves all your Admiration; in that Senſe our Sacraments are called Myſteries: *3dly.* For a Secret and far-fetched Deſign, which goes on ſilently and inſenſibly; in that Senſe, St. *Paul* calls the Work of the Antichriſt, *the Myſtery of Iniquity.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Concerning the Divinity of our Saviour.

THE Chriſtian Faith is, That as the reaſonable Soul and Fleſh is one Man, ſo God and Man is one Chriſt; and that his Perſon, conſiſting both of God and Man united, ſuffered for our Salvation; but that all the Sufferings were inflicted on the human Nature, and terminated in it; but by virtue of the perſonal Union of his divine with his human Nature, all Chriſt's Sufferings received an infinite Value and Merit, and became intituled and aſcribed to God himſelf, becauſe they were undergone by that Perſon who is God as well as Man; tho' they were not undergone by him in his divine, but only in his human Nature; for it is very uſual in other Books, and very agreeable to the Style of Scripture, and to the common Speech and Senſe of Men, for thoſe Actions of a Perſon to be attributed to one of the united Natures, which could be performed only in the other, of which one may ſee ſeveral Inſtances; *Exod.* i. 5. *Lev.* v. 2. vii. 18, 20. xxi. 11. xxii. 4. *Acts* xi. 27. *Pſalm* xvi. 10. *Gen.* vi. 12. *Pſalm* lxv. 2. *Iſa.* xlix. 26. xlvi. 23. *Luke* iii. 6. *Acts* ii. 17. *Joel* xi. 28. *Galat.* xi. 16.

IF any one asks, How is the Union between the divine and human Nature in Chriſt made, and wherein does it conſiſt? We may reply, as our Saviour ſometime did to the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, by asking another Queſtion, and inquiring

quiring how the Body and Soul in Man are united, and how God is preſent in all Places, and how in him we live and move and have our Being: And if no Man can tell how theſe Things are, tho' no Man can deny the Truth and Reality of them; then it is not to be expected that we ſhould be able to tell how the Union between the divine and human Nature in Chriſt is made, or in what it conſiſts; we muſt acknowledg it a Myſtery, which it is above any Man's Capacity to explain; but that there is ſuch an Union we learn from the Scriptures, and thither we appeal for the Truth of it; and the putting ſuch Queſtions argues either a great Mind to cavil, or great Inconſideration, and Shortneſs of Thought: For what Man is there, pretending to Reaſon and Argument, of ſo little Obſervation as not to take Notice, that of all the Things which we daily ſee and perceive to be in the World, the Nature and Manner of Exiſtence of very few, or rather of none of them, is fully underſtood by us? It is ſufficient for us to know, that great Reaſons may be given for this Diſpenſation of the Son of God Incarnate, and that no material Objection can be framed againſt it.

Assuredly there is no Medium, but Chriſt is either truly God, or he was (what we ought to tremble but to repeat, and what they who give the Occaſion, ought much more to tremble to hear) the moſt preſumptuous and prophane, the laſt and moſt deteſtable of Men; and we ſhould be very hard put to it to prove any ſuch Thing as a divine Revelation, could we ſuppoſe it poſſible for God to give ſuch Teſtimony as he did to Jeſus, ſo far above the Works that any other Man had done, were not his Declarations of his Divinity ſtrictly and literally true; for upon other Terms, he was unqueſtionably the moſt dangerous

dangerous Seducer of the People; and the boldest Invader of God's Honour and Prerogative, that ever yet attempted upon Mankind.

If the Father of a Family assumes the Title of King, on Pretence that he hath some Authority over his Children, if he taketh it often without Restriction or Lenitive; and especially, if he expects to be used like a King, without doubt he is very guilty; but the Crime will be greater, if he be a Magistrate who takes upon him that Title among his Fellow Citizens, because that Attempt becomes then of a more dangerous Consequence; the Crime will be greater still, if it be the Governor of some Province; and in short greater in Proportion to the Dignity of the Person: So the Name of God being consecrated by a most holy ancient Custom, to represent the God who created the Heavens and the Earth, it may be said, that, far from justifying the Proceeding of those who give it to another, by saying that it is a noble and excellent Creature it is ascribed to, on the contrary, that very Thing should in that Respect increase the Blasphemy and Impiety.

Herod did not believe himself the supreme God, neither did the People imagine that their King had on a sudden been changed into the supreme Being; however, his Impiety received an exemplary Punishment: So it will not avail to clear Jesus Christ of Blasphemy, (if he be such as the *Socinians* conceive him to be) to say that he declares himself to be a Man, that he acknowledgeth that his Father is greater than he; one may be impious without giving himself to be the supreme God, as it appears by the afore-mentioned Example. Impiety and Idolatry do not only consist in usurping the whole Glory of God, but also in usurping Part of it.

That Expression of Christ, *The Father is greater than I*, far from concluding any Thing against his Divinity, it may be said, that it would be a very arrogant Modesty in a mere Creature to say, that the supreme God is greater than it. *Moses*, *Isaias*, the Prophets, do not speak at that Rate; a Subject does not affect to say, That his King is greater than he, that need not be told: A Creature will not say so neither of his Creator; for it would be to compare itself with him.

If Christ had been a mere Man, there would be no Occasion to extol so much his Charity, in being willing to die for the Redemption of Mankind; for, let there be a Choice made amongst all the Men in the World, even the most barbarous and most unnatural, you will scarce find one who would not be ready to suffer Death upon the like Conditions; where is the Man who would not if he could, purchase eternal Life for all Mankind, by suffering Death, being sure to be rais'd on the third Day, and by that to get the Dominion over all the Creatures? Tho' he would not do it out of Charity, he would certainly do it out of Self-love and Interest.

If Christ was but a mere Man, his Death would not be so fit, as is told us, to shew the Abhorrence God hath for Sin; and it seems that we need not be so scrupulous to commit it, if it can be done away so easily; since the Blood of one single Man should have been sufficient to expiate the Sins of all Mankind.

We cannot say, that Christ is the Son of God, because God loveth him; but we must say that God loveth him, because he is his Son: The Scripture indeed saith, *Behold what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God*; but it is no-where said, Behold what Love God hath bestowed upon Christ,

that

that he ſhould call him his Son; becauſe the Denomination of Children, which we bear is foreign and accidental to us; but the Title of Son, which Chriſt bears, is proper and eſſential to him.

Let there be never ſo many Doubts raiſed about ſome Books of the Scripture, or ſo many Speculations made concerning the Way the Apoſtles were inſpired, all that is to no Purpoſe, becauſe theſe two Truths will remain in their full Force; the Firſt, That the Apoſtles have applied to Jeſus Chriſt, either by way of Accommodation, Alluſion, or otherwiſe ſome Paſſages out of the Prophets which denote the ſupreme God; the Second, That if Chriſt does not partake of the Glory of the divine Eſſence, and is but a Creature, to whom therefore thoſe Marks are not agreeable; we muſt look upon the Apoſtles as upon Men who draw others into Idolatry by very impious Quibbles, and by blaſphemous Applications of the Scripture; ſo it appears, that if the Opinion of the Enemies of the Divinity of Chriſt was true, neither the Prophets ſhould have made a right Prediction of Events, nor the Apoſtles ſhould have had a right Underſtanding of the Prophets, and conſequently there would be no Harmony between the Old and New Teſtament.

It is certain that the Scripture of the New Teſtament aſcribes to Chriſt all the Works of God, the Creation of all Things which had always been the Character of the God of *Iſrael*, the Preſervation of every Thing which belongs to the Creator, the Redemption of the World, which the Prophets did only refer to the ſupreme God; *&c.* it is certain that the ſame Scripture aſcribes to him the Power of God, the Eternity of God, the Immenſity of God, the Providence of God, the Juſtice and Mercy of God; we find

that

that Chriſt is repreſented to us as being one with God, equal with God, the ſame with God. It is certain that he is called in Scripture *the Lord, the Lord of Glory, Lord God, God manifeſted in the Fleſh, the great God and Saviour, the mighty God, the true God, the moſt High, God over all Bleſſed for ever*; and I maintain, that a Creature, who would have encroached upon the Glory of the Godhead, by aſſuming the Characters proper to it, could not do it otherwiſe, nor more effectually.

Some ſay, That when Chriſt is ſaid to be equal with God, it is a figurative and hyperbolical Equality; but do they well obſerve, that tho' the ſacred Writers ſometimes uſe hyperbolical Expreſſions, they never do it when the Glory of God may be concerned, by making an unworthy Compariſon of the Creator with the Creature?

When the Scripture aſcribes ſome Quality or Perfection to God the Father alone, 'tis not to exclude the Son; our Adverſaries themſelves are forced to it; for when Chriſt ſaith that there is none good but God, do they pretend to exclude Chriſt? And is it not ſtill true, that Chriſt is the *Meek* by Way of Eminency? And when that bleſſed Saviour tells us, *Call none upon Earth your Maſter, for there is but one who is your Maſter*, does he pretend to exclude himſelf? When God is repreſented to us as being our only Saviour, muſt we exclude Jeſus Chriſt? Or, when Chriſt is repreſented to us as our only Saviour, there being no Salvation in any other, muſt we exclude God? the Scripture aſcribes to God to be the only Wiſe, only Good, to poſſeſs alone Immortality; muſt we then aſſert that the Word *only* ſo excludes all other Subjects, that thoſe Titles cannot belong to Jeſus Chriſt? And when St. *Paul* propoſeth to himſelf to know only Jeſus Chriſt, and

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt crucified; did he intend to ſay that the Knowledge of the Father is not neceſſary to our Salvation? And, when it is ſaid, that none knows the Things of God, but the Spirit of God which is in him, can we from thence infer that the Father and the Son do not know the Things which are of God?

Because the Angel which appeared to *Mary*, to bring her the News of the Birth of our Saviour, told her, *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the Power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee, therefore alſo, that holy Thing which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be called the Son of God*; the Enemies of the Divinity of Chriſt, take Occaſion from that, to ask, How the Evangeliſt could ſay, that Jeſus Chriſt ſhould be called the Son of God, becauſe he ſhould have been made by the Virtue of the Holy Ghoſt, if it be true that he is the Son of God from all Eternity? In anſwer to that, many Things may be ſaid; and among the reſt, that the Scripture often, to denote the Event of Things, uſeth Expreſſions which ſeem to denote the Cauſe; as when the Evangeliſt ſaith, *Therefore alſo they could not believe*, becauſe again another Prophecy ſaith; ſo the Expreſſion, in which lieth the Streſs of the Difficulty and Objection, ſeems to denote the Cauſe for which Chriſt ſhould be called the Son of God, but it denotes only the Event; ſo that the Meaning of the above-recited Words comes to no more than this, *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, the Power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee, and it ſhall come to paſs, that what ſhall be born of thee Holy, ſhall be called the Son of God.*

Since it may be ſaid in general, That God hath anointed his Son; that he hath ſent his Son to be our King, our Prophet, and our high Prieſt; that he hath rais'd his Son; that he hath exalted his Son; far from arguing that Chriſt is the Son

of

of God only, becauſe he was ſpiritually anointed, becauſe he was endued with his Offices, becauſe he was raiſed from the Dead, and ſupremely exalted after his Reſurrection; it is rather neceſſary to acknowledge that Chriſt was anointed above his Fellows, only becauſe he was endued with the Office of Mediator, and his other Offices, which could not be performed by another, that he became the firſt Fruits of them that ſlept, and was exalted after his Reſurrection, only becauſe he was before all this the Son of God; and it being ſo, we muſt either look upon his Conception by the Holy Ghoſt, as the only Foundation on which is grounded his Title of Son of God, which is proved to be extravagant, or we muſt have Recourſe to a more ancient Generation than this.

Adam is called the Son of God, becauſe God immediately created him; Angels are called Sons of God, for the Excellency of their Condition; Kings are ſo likewiſe, by reaſon of their Advancement over Men; the Faithful are ſo, by Right of Adoption; but none but the Meſſiah is ſo, by Way of Generation; then theſe Words, *This Day I have begotten thee*, can have no Regard but to the Meſſiah.

There is nothing more frivolous than to think that Chriſt was made God by his Exaltation to the heavenly Glory; ſince, on the contrary, that very Exaltation proves that he was God by Nature, afore he was exalted, and that without it, he had not been capable of being thus exalted; that is confirmed by the Proteſtation God makes, *Iſai.* xlii. *I am the Lord, that is my Name; and my Glory will I not give to another*; which is repeated chap. xlviii.

How and with what Confidence could the Apoſtles have condemned the Worſhip of falſe Gods, and taught

taught the World, That none ought to be acknowledged for God, but the only Creator of Heaven and Earth; if at the ſame time they themſelves ſet up an apotheoſed God in the Perſon of Chriſt; if in worſhipping him, (as they did profeſs to worſhip him, and pay him a religious Service) they had acknowledged him not to be God by Nature, but only by reaſon of his Exaltation?

As the Royal Dignity of our Lord is infinitely glorious, it is likewiſe a Demonſtration of the Divinity of his Perſon: There is no mere Creature capable to bear the Weight of ſo auguſt a Majeſty, nor to exerciſe ſo great an Authority, nor to diſplay ſuch a Strength and Power as he does.

As much as it is odd to ſee a noble Being made ſubject to one leſs perfect, ſo much is it natural, that a Being leſs perfect ſhould be made ſubject to one more noble: Now the Incarnation gives us an Inſtance of the laſt, and the Union of the Soul with the Body ſhews us the former: It follows therefore, that the Union of the Soul with the Body, is in ſome reſpect extraordinary, and more ſurprizing, than the Incarnation.

A Conſequence of the Incarnation is, that the human Nature was made Partaker of the Worſhip and religious Adoration of the Creatures, not in itſelf, or by itſelf, ſince it is itſelf a Creature; but in the Perſon; that is, the whole Perſon in which is the Divinity and Humanity is the Object or End of our Adoration; though the formal Reaſon for which we adore that Perſon, is his infinite Divinity.

When our Saviour ſaith, *The Father is greater than I*, theſe Words denote the Inequality of the oeconomical Offices, by which the Father, having taken upon himſelf the Dignity, or Quality,

lity, of ſupreme Director of the Univerſe; and the Son, that of Mediator; the Father is become greater than the Son, not by any Inequality of Dignity, or perſonal Majeſty, but by the Inequality of their Offices and Employments.

It is as hard to believe, that a Man ſhould become God, as it is to believe, that a God ſhould be made Man; but in that Equality of Difficulties in reſpect of the natural Light of Reaſon, the laſt Suppoſition hath theſe Advantages; *1ſt*, That it is wholly agreeable with the Scripture, whereas the other is oppoſed by it. *2dly*, That we may ſet forth very weighty Reaſons of that incomprehenſible Myſtery of the Incarnation of a divine Perſon, *viz.* The Salvation of Men, the Satisfaction of the divine Juſtice for our Sins, the Preſervation of a Religion among Mankind, the Exerciſe of the divine Mercy, the eternal Glory of God, *&c.* But when the *Socinian* ſhall find himſelf obliged to account for his Hypotheſis, he can ſay nothing that may be either neceſſary or material.

The Hypoſtatick Union, is a voluntary aſſuming, or adopting (if we may ſo ſpeak) of the human Nature, by the Perſon of the Eternal Word, to be henceforth perſonal to him; that is, to belong to him in ſuch a Manner, as all its Names, its Qualities, Properties, Rights, Actions, Sufferings, its Subſtance itſelf; in a Word, whatever it hath been, whatever it is, ſhould belong to him perſonally.

Had we not too many ſad Inſtances of it at this Day, it would ſeem incredible, that any who own, or at leaſt profeſs to own the divine Authority of the Writings of the New Teſtament, ſhould deny, or queſtion the divine Nature of our bleſſed Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; ſince it is to be proved not by a few, but almoſt innume-

rable

rable Places of that ſacred Book, as will manifeſtly appear to thoſe who will but impartially read, examine, and compare all the undermentioned.

The firſt are thoſe where he is called God, the great God; for which ſee *Matth.* chap. i. ver. 23. St. *Luke*, chap. i. ver. 16. St. *John*'s Goſpel, chap. i. ver. 1. *ibid.* chap. x. ver. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. chap. xx. ver. 28. *Acts*, chap. xx. ver. 28. Epiſt. to the *Romans*, chap. ix. ver. 5. Epiſt. to the *Galat.* chap. i. ver. 1, 12. Epiſt. to the *Coloſſ.* chap. ii. ver. 9. firſt Epiſt. to *Tim.* chap. iii. ver. 16. Epiſt. to *Titus*, chap. ii. ver. 13. Epiſt. to the *Heb.* chap. i. ver. 8. *ibid.* chap. iii. ver. 3, 4. Firſt Epiſt. of St. *John*, chap. iii. ver. 16. *ibid.* chap. v. ver. 20.

Secondly, Thoſe where he is called the Son of God, and his only begotten Son, one and equal with his Father; the moſt remarkable of which, are to found in *Matt.* chap. xi. ver. 27. chap. xiv. ver. 33. chap. xvi. ver. 16. chap. xxvi. ver. 63, 64, 65. St. *Mark*, chap. xii. ver. 6. chap. xiv. ver. 61, 62. St. *Luke*, chap. x. ver. 22. chap. xxii. ver. 70, 71. St. *John*'s Goſpel, chap. i. ver. 14, 18, 49. chap. xiii. ver. 16. chap. v. ver. 18. *Acts*, chap. viii. ver. 37. chap. ix. ver. 20. Epiſt. to the *Rom.* chap. i. ver. 3, 4. chap. v. ver. 10. chap. viii. ver. 3, 32. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Corinth.* chap. i. ver. 9. Second Epiſt. to the *Corinth.* chap. i. ver. 19. Epiſt. to the *Galat.* chap. ii. ver. 20. Epiſt. to the *Heb.* chap. i. ver. 2, 5. chap. iii. ver. 6. chap. iv. ver. 14. chap. v. ver. 8. Firſt Epiſt. of St. *John*, chap. ii. ver. 22, 23, 24. chap. iv. ver. 9, 10, 15.

Thirdly, Thoſe where he is called Lord, the ſupreme Lord; the chief of which, are to be ſeen in St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, chap. i. ver. 16, 43, chap. ii. ver. 11. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Corinth.* chap. v.

ver. 4, 5. chap. viii. ver. 6. chap. xii. ver. 3. chap. xv. ver. 47. Firſt Epiſt. to *Tim.* chap. vi. ver. 15.

Fourthly, THOSE where he is ſaid to be worſhipped and prayed to, as is related in St. *Matt.* chap. ii. ver. 11. chap. xiv. ver. 33. chap. xxviii. ver. 9. St. *John's* Goſpel, chap. v. ver. 23. chap. ix. ver. 38. *Acts*, chap. vii. ver. 59. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Theſſ.* chap. iii. ver. 11. Second Epiſt. to the *Theſſ.* chap. ii. ver. 16, 17. Epiſt. to the *Heb.* chap. i. ver. 6. *Rev.* chap. i. ver. 6. chap. v. ver. 8, 13.

Fifthly, WE find the incommunicable Attributes of God aſcribed to him, *viz.* Creation, Eternity, Omnipreſence, Almighty Power, that of forgiving of Sins, of diſpenſing all ſpiritual Graces, of ſending the Holy Ghoſt; for all which in their Order, ſee the following Places. St. *John's* Goſpel, chap. i. ver. 3, 10. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Cor.* chap. viii. ver. 6. Epiſt. to the *Coloſſ.* chap. i. ver. 16, 17. St. *John's* Goſpel, chap. i. ver. 1, 2, 15, 30. chap. vi. ver. 62. chap. viii. ver. 58. chap. xvii. ver. 5. Epiſt. to the *Coloſſ.* chap. i. ver. 15. *Rev.* chap. i. ver. 17. Epiſt. to the *Heb.* chap. xiii. ver. 8. St. *Matt.* chap. xviii. ver. 20. chap. xxviii. ver. 20. St. *John's* Goſpel, chap. i. ver. 49. chap. iii. ver. 13. St. *John's* Goſpel, chap. ii. ver. 24, 25. chap. xvi. ver. 30. chap. xxi. ver. 17. *Rev.* chap. ii. ver. 23. St. *John's* Goſpel, chap. v. ver. 21. *Acts*, chap. ix. ver. 34. Epiſt. to the *Philip.* chap. iii. ver. 21. Epiſt. to the *Heb.* chap. i. ver. 3. St. *Matt.* chap. ix. ver. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. St. *Mark*, chap. ii. ver. 5. *& ſeqq.* St. *Luke*, chap. v. ver. 20, 21, *&c.* chap. vii. ver. 48. Epiſt. to the *Coloſſ.* chap. iii. ver. 13. Epiſt. to the *Rom.* chap. i. ver. 7. *Galat.* chap. i. ver. 3. chap. vi. ver. 18. *Epheſ.* chap. i. ver. 2. chap. 6. ver. 23. *Philip.* chap. i. ver. 19. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Theſſ.* chap. i. ver. 1. Firſt Epiſt. to *Tim.* chap. i. ver. 12. Second Epiſt.

to *Tim.* chap. i. ver. 2. Second Epiſt. of St. *John*, chap. i. ver. 3. St. *John*'s Goſpel, chap. xvi. ver. 7.

Sixthly, and *laſtly*, He is ſaid to have been a Sacrifice and a Ranſom for our Sins, and to have made a Propitiation and Reconciliation for us; which could no more have been done by the Blood of a mere Man, than by the Blood of Bulls and Goats. See St. *Matt.* chap. xx. ver. 28. chap. xxvi. ver. 28. St. *Mark*, chap. x. ver. 45. Epiſt. to the *Rom.* chap. iii. ver. 24, 25. chap. iv. ver. 25. chap. v. ver. 10. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Cor.* chap. i. ver. 30. chap. v. ver. 7. chap. xv. ver. 3. Second Epiſt. to the *Cor.* chap. v. ver. 18, 19, 21. Epiſt. to the *Galat.* chap. i. ver. 4. chap. ii. ver. 20. *Epheſ.* chap. i. ver. 7. chap. v. ver. 2. *Coloſ.* chap. i. ver. 14. Firſt Epiſt. to the *Theſſ.* chap. i. ver. 10. chap. v. ver. 9, 10. *Heb.* chap. ix. ver. 28. Firſt Epiſt. of *Peter*, chap. ii. ver. 24. Firſt Epiſt. of St. *John*, chap. iii. ver. 16. chap. iv. ver. 10, 14.

There are many other Places of Scripture, from which the Divinity of our Saviour may be rightly inferred; but the above-mentioned are more than ſufficient to convince any Man, who has a due Regard for theſe ſacred Writings.

CHAP. XIX.

Concerning the Creation of the World.

It is much more eaſy to conceive how a Thing that once was not, might ſome time be brought into Being by another, than how a Thing ſhould be always of itſelf; for that which once was not, is ſuppoſed to have ſomething before it, by which it might be made, though not out of

which it was made; but that which was always, neither had nor could have any thing, by which or out of which it could be made.

Tho' the making of the World of nothing ſignifies an inconceivable Exceſs of Power, yet there can no Contradiction be ſhewn in it; and it is every whit as eaſy to conceive, that ſomething ſhould be cauſed to be, that was not before, as that any thing ſhould be of itſelf; which yet muſt be granted on both Sides, and therefore this Difficulty ought not to be objected by either.

There can be no ſuch thing as natural Cauſes, till the World is made, and every thing endowed with its natural Virtues and Powers, and united into a regular Frame, with a mutual Dependence and Connexion: And therefore it is a vain thing to talk of making the World by natural Cauſes. And it is as certain, that Nature muſt move unnaturally, before the World can be deſtroyed; for, while natural Cauſes keep their natural Courſe, they will preſerve, not deſtroy the World; and what can put Nature into ſuch an univerſal Diſorder, but the ſame divine Power, which put it into Order, and gave Laws to it?

God could never make a World ſo early, at any given Moment, but it may truly be ſaid he could have created it ſooner.

Whenever the World hath been created, there muſt have been a Time, when it had exiſted but Six thouſand Years, and then the Shortneſs of the Epocha might have been objected as well as now.

We are apt enough to admire other Things, little Toys; but we overlook this vaſt curious Engine of the World. Thoſe Parts of it which we think of little or no Uſe, as Rocks and Deſarts, and that vaſt Wilderneſs of the Sea, if we

conſider

conſider Things well, are of great Uſe to ſeveral very conſiderable Purpoſes, or at the worſt they may ſerve for Foils to ſet off the wiſe Order and Contrivance of other Things; and (as one expreſſeth it) they may be like a Blackmoor's Head in a Picture, which giveth the greater Beauty to the whole Piece.

He that will build a Houſe for all the Uſes and Purpoſes of which a Houſe is capable, cannot make it all Foundation, and great Beams and Pillars, all Rooms of State and Entertainment; but there muſt of Neceſſity be in it meaner Materials, Rooms and Offices for ſeveral Uſes and Purpoſes; which, however inferior to the reſt in Dignity and Degree, do yet contribute to the Beauty and Advantage of the Whole: So in this great Frame of the World it was fit there ſhould be Variety, and different Degrees of Perfection in the ſeveral Parts of it.

It may eaſily be imagined many Ways, how the Sun might have had another Courſe in reference to the Earth: But no Man can deviſe any other that ſhould not be very much to the Prejudice of the World. So that this being the beſt, it is an Argument that Wiſdom had the ordering and diſpoſing of it.

Since there is an internal and natural Impoſſibility, that a ſucceſſive Duration ſhould be actually eternal, 'tis a flat Contradiction, that the World ſhould have been created from Everlaſting; and therefore it is no Affront to the divine Omnipotence, if by reaſon of the formal Incapacity and Repugnancy of the Thing, we conceive that the World could not poſſibly have been made from all Eternity, even by God himſelf.

It ſeems impoſſible, and a Contradiction, that a created World ſhould be infinite; becauſe it is the Nature of Quantity and Motion, that they

can never be actually and poſitively infinite: They have a Power indeed, and a Capacity of being increaſed without End, ſo as no Quantity can be aſſigned ſo vaſt, but ſtill a larger may be imagined; no Motion ſo ſwift or languid, but a greater Velocity or Slowneſs may ſtill be conceived; no poſitive Duration of it ſo long, than which a longer may not be ſuppoſed; but even that very Power hinders them from being actually infinite.

Since God Almighty can do all that is poſſible, and Quantity hath always a Poſſibility of being inlarged more and more; he could never create ſo ample a World, but ſtill it would be true, that he could have made a bigger, the Fecundity of his creative Power never growing barren, nor ever to be exhauſted. Now what may always be an Exception againſt all poſſible Worlds, can never be a juſt one againſt any whatſoever.

The infinite Diſtance between the Creator, and the nobleſt of all Creatures, can never be meaſured nor exhauſted by endleſs Addition of finite Degrees; ſo that no actual Creature can ever be the moſt perfect of all poſſible Creation; which ſhews the Folly of thoſe, who would impiouſly and abſurdly attempt to tie the Arm of Omnipotence from doing any thing, becauſe it can never do its utmoſt.

Which is moſt reaſonable, to attribute ſuch Works, as are above our Underſtandings, to the infinite Wiſdom of God; or to deny that they had any wiſe Cauſe, becauſe we cannot find out the Cauſes of them, tho' we can diſcern ſuch Wiſdom in them, as no human Art or Wiſdom can imitate?

Was ever any conſiderable Work, in which there was required a great Variety of Parts, and a regular and orderly Diſpoſition of thoſe Parts,

done

done by Chance? Will Chance fit Means to the Ends, and that in Ten thouſand Inſtances, and not fail in any one?

What does that Chance ſo much talked of conſiſt in? Is it ſomething or nothing? If it be ſomething, it muſt either be a created Being, and then we muſt own that there is a Creator; or it is an uncreated Being, and then we muſt conceive Chance as a Thing diſtinct from Matter, eternal, incorruptible, which is neceſſarily and by itſelf, and by conſequence, Chance will be preciſely what we call God; but if Chance is nothing, it follows that we are deceived, when we are told, that it is Chance hath made the World; and we might as well ſay, that nothing has made it, or that the Cauſe that made it, is unknown to us.

Chance is but a mere Name, and really nothing in itſelf, a Conception of our own Minds, and only a compendious Way of ſpeaking, whereby we would expreſs, that ſuch Effects, as are commonly attributed to Chance, were verily produced by their true and proper Cauſes, but without their deſigning to produce them.

As it would be ridiculous, in viewing the Tools in an Handicraftſman's Shop, to ſay, That they had not been made for ſuch and ſuch Uſe; but, that having been ſo made by Chance, they have been employed to ſuch and ſuch Uſe; 'tis likewiſe much more ridiculous to ſay, when we conſider the organical Parts of Animals Bodies, and obſerve that Induſtry and Inſtinct Nature hath endowed them with, That they were made by Chance, and that the Author of them had no more Deſign to make them capable of ſeeing, when he made the Eye, or of hearing, when he made the Ear, than when he made a Stone or a Tree: Can we ſay likewiſe that it is by Chance,

that we have two Eyes, without ſeeing double, and two Ears, without hearing a double Sound?

Tho' we could not find out the End of ſome things in Nature, 'twould be ridiculous and fooliſh to imagine, for that Reaſon, that they were made for none; for it would be a ſuppoſing that we know every thing.

The Univerſe is made for God, and it is made for intelligent Creatures; as a Picture is made for the Original it repreſents, and for thoſe who are to look upon it.

A wiſe Workman cannot propoſe to himſelf any End that is below him; all that is not God, is below God; he cannot then act but for himſelf; he directs all his Works to his Glory; he ought to be their End, as he is their Principle.

When we ſay, God is the laſt End, we mean, that all Things refer to him, that the Deſign and Aim of all Things that are made, is the Illuſtration of God's Glory, ſome Way or other, and the Manifeſtation of his Perfections.

The Philoſophers might have eaſily conceived how God had done to ſet the Matter of the Univerſe in that Order we ſee it is, if they had carefully conſidered the Motions of a human Body, which we determine by the mere Act of our Will: Since I have the Notion of a Being, who can act by his Will, I can, by improving that Idea, fancy a Cauſe ſo perfect, that it ſhould have made this Univerſe by its Will.

As the Earth was principally deſigned for the Being, and Service, and Contemplation of Men, why may not all the other Planets be created for the like Uſes, each for their own Inhabitants, which have Life and Underſtanding? If any Man will indulge himſelf in this Speculation, he need not quarrel with revealed Religion upon ſuch an Account; the holy Scriptures do not forbid him to ſuppoſe a great Multitude of Syſtems, and

and as much inhabited as he pleaſeth; neither need we be ſolicitous about the Condition of thoſe planetary People, nor raiſe frivolous Diſputes, how far they may participate in the Miſeries of *Adam*'s Fall, or in the Benefits of Chriſt's Incarnation; as if, becauſe they are ſuppoſed to be rational, they muſt needs be concluded to be Men; for what is Man? Not a reaſonable Animal merely, for that is not an adequate and diſtinguiſhing Definition; but a rational Mind of ſuch particular Faculties, united to an organical Body, of ſuch a Structure and Form, in ſuch peculiar Laws of Connexion between the Operations and Affections of the Mind, and the Motions of the Body: But a Mind of ſuperior or meaner Capacities than human, would conſtitute a different Species, tho' united to a human Body, in the ſame Laws of Connexion; and a Mind of human Capacities, would make another Species, if united to a different Body, in different Laws of Connexion; for this ſympathetical Union of a rational Soul with Matter, ſo as to produce a vital Communication between them, is an arbitrary Inſtitution of divine Wiſdom; there is no Reaſon or Foundation in the ſeparate Natures of either Subſtance, why any Motion in the Body ſhould produce any Senſation at all in the Soul; or, why this Motion ſhould produce that particular Senſation, rather than any other: God therefore may have joined immaterial Souls, even of the ſame Claſs and Capacities in their ſeparate State, to other Kind of Bodies, and in other Laws of Union; and from thoſe different Laws of Union, there will ariſe quite different Affections, and Natures, and Species, of the compound Being.

The true Notion of Fortune, denotes no more than the Ignorance of ſuch an Event, in ſome know-

ing Agent concerned about it; ſo that it owes its very Being to human Underſtanding: How abſurd then and ridiculous is the Atheiſt, that would make this Fortune the Cauſe of the Formation of Mankind! Whereas, manifeſtly, there could be no ſuch Thing or Notion in the World as Fortune, till human Nature was actually formed: It was Man that firſt made Fortune, and not Fortune that produced Man.

Since the famous Epochs of the Creation, of the Flood, and of the Diviſion of Languages, cannot be convinced of Falſhood, and that beſides they agree with all that is certain or likely in all other Hiſtories; it is a convincing Proof, that *Moſes*'s Memoirs were of a divine Original, and that he was directed by the Spirit of the Creator, to be able to determine, ſo preciſely, the Time of the Creation.

If the Univerſe was made in Proceſs of Time by the Motion of Matter, why have not new Planets now and then appeared? Why were there never any new Suns or new Moons perceived?

When we reflect upon the immenſe Extenſion of the Univerſe, upon the vaſt Bodies of the Stars; which are, perhaps, ſo many Suns, having their own peculiar Heaven, and their own Planets; it is a hard Matter to give any other probable Account of them, than that of the Glory of God, who hath been willing to imprint ſome Characters of his infinite Wiſdom and Power in the Immenſity of the Univerſe, and the Multiplicity of his great Works.

God, conſidered under the Notion of our Creator, is apt to ſtrike us with a particular Regard and Awe of him upon a threefold Account, as Creation is a ſenſible Demonſtration to us: *1ſt*, Of the Being; *2dly*, Of the Power; *3dly*, Of the Goodneſs of God.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

Of Divine Providence.

NEXT to the Acknowledgement of God's Being, nothing is more eſſential to Religion, than the Belief of his Providence; and nothing can be a greater Argument of Providence, than that there is ſuch an Order of Cauſes laid in Nature, that, in ordinary Courſe, every Thing does uſually attain its End; and yet, that there is ſuch a Mixture of Contingency, as that now and then we cannot tell how or why the moſt likely Cauſes do deceive us, and fail of producing their uſual Effects; becauſe a Providence does ſuppoſe all Things to have been at firſt wiſely framed, and with a Fitneſs to attain their End: But yet it does alſo ſuppoſe, that God hath reſerved to himſelf a Power and Liberty to interpoſe, and to croſs, as he pleaſes, the uſual Courſe of Things, to awaken Men to the Conſideration of him, and a continual Dependence upon him, and to teach us to aſcribe thoſe things to his wiſe Diſpoſal, which, if we never ſaw any Change, we ſhould be apt to impute to blind Neceſſity.

The Providence of God is either Ordinary, when he governs all things according to their Natures and Powers given them at their Creation; or Extraordinary, when he does not obſerve that Order; but either puts a Stop to it for the Puniſhment of Sin, or elſe works Miracles, which

are

are above the Power, and ſometimes contrary to the regular Courſe of Nature.

If we believe there is a God, who made the World, we muſt believe that the ſame God, who made the World, does govern it too: For it is as abſurd and unreaſonable, to think that the World is governed by Chance, as to think that it was made by Chance; for Chance can no more govern, than it can make the World.

The general Notion of Providence, is God's Care of all the Creatures he hath made; which muſt conſiſt in preſerving and upholding their Beings and Natures, and in ſuch Acts of Government, as the good Order of the World, and the Happineſs of Mankind require; which divide Providence into Preſervation and Government; which muſt be carefully diſtinguiſhed, in order to anſwer ſome great Difficulties in Providence.

The ordinary Government of Nature does not ſignify to act without it, or to over-rule its Powers, but to ſteer and guide its Motions, to ſerve the wiſe Ends of God's Providence, in the Government of Mankind.

When we ſee a World wiſely made, tho' we did not ſee it made, yet we conclude that it was not made by Chance, but by a wiſe Being: And by the ſame Reaſon, when we ſee accidental Events, nay, a long incoherent Series of Accidents, concur to the producing the moſt admirable Effects, we ought to conclude, that there is a wiſe, inviſible Hand, which governs Chance, which, of itſelf, can do nothing wiſely.

Were Providence nothing elſe but a neceſſary Chain of Cauſes, or fixed and immutable Decrees, there would be no great Encouragement to pray to God; who, upon this Suppoſition, cannot help us, no more than he can alter Deſtiny

Deſtiny and Fate; but if God governs the World with as great Liberty and Freedom, as a wiſe and good Man governs his Family, or a Prince governs his Kingdoms, there is as much Reaſon to pray to God, as to offer up our Petitions to our Parents, or to our Prince.

God may haſten and aſſiſt natural Cauſes upon our Prayers; he may quicken the Motions, and inforce the Powers of Nature, and remove ſecret Impediments, to help and make Way for natural Operations; or he may ſlacken and retard natural Cauſes.

God at no Time leaves Nature to itſelf, but ever concurs with it by aſſiſting its Power, and directing its Courſe; he ordinarily interpoſeth in the conſtant Courſe of Things, according to eſtabliſhed Laws; but in Miracles, he interpoſes in an extraordinary Manner, and alters that Method which he hath preſcribed to himſelf to obſerve in the common Courſe of Nature.

We are apt to attribute all things to the next and immediate Agent, not conſidering, that all the Motions of natural Cauſes are directly ſubordinate to the firſt Cauſe, and all the Actions of free Creatures are under the Government of God's wiſe Providence; ſo that nothing happens to us, beſide the Deſign and Intention of God.

God hath ſo ordered Things in the Adminiſtration of the Affairs of the World, as to encourage the Uſe of Means, by generally permitting them to their natural Courſe; and yet, ſo as to keep Men in a continual Dependence upon him, for the Efficacy and Succeſs of them, by ſometimes more remarkably interpoſing to hide Pride from Man, as the Expreſſion is in *Job*.

We ſhould indeed uſe the Means as vigorouſly as if God did nothing; and when we have done ſo,

ſo, we ſhould depend upon God for the Succeſs of thoſe Means, as if we ourſelves had done nothing, but did expect all from his Favour and Bleſſing.

Tho' prudent Care and Diligence will not always do the Buſineſs, yet there is nothing to be done without them in the ordinary Courſe of Things; and in the Order of ſecond Cauſes, they are the moſt likely and effectual Means to any End.

If Men would but take a View of what has happened to them in the Courſe of a long Life, moſt of us would ſee Reaſon to acknowledge, that our Proſperity and Succeſs in any Kind, hath depended more upon happy Opportunities, upon undeſigned and unexpected Occurrences, than upon our own Forecaſt and Conduct.

As an unskilful Man, after he hath tampered a great while with a Watch, thinking to bring it into better Order, and is at laſt convinced he can do no good upon it, carries it to him that made it, to mend it, and to put it into Order; ſo muſt we do after all our Care and Anxiety about our own private Concernments, or the publick State of Things: We muſt give over governing the World, as a Buſineſs paſt our Skill; and leave it to him who made the World, to govern it, and take Care of it.

Indeed nothing is abſolutely good but God; all created Things are good or ill, in reference to that to which they are applied. Meat is good, but to a ſurfeited Stomach, 'tis not only nauſeous, but dangerous; Fire is good, but if put in our Boſoms, not only burns our Cloaths, but Fleſh. And as human Wiſdom directs the right Application of theſe and the like, ſo the Supreme and Divine, orders Events according to the Diſpoſition of the Perſon concerned. *He knows our Frame,*

Frame, Psalm ciii. 14. and discerns what Operations such and such Things will have upon us; while we, who know neither ourselves nor them, can make but random Guesses, and worse Choices.

We put our Estates in the Lawyer's Hand, our Bodies into the Physician's, and submit to their Advice, tho' it be against our Humour, merely because we account them more competent Judges; yet this Deference we cannot be perswaded to pay to God; what is it but interpretatively to deny either his Wisdom, or his Goodness, or both?

It is an easy thing with God to level Mens Estates, and to give every Man a Competency; but he does on Purpose suffer Things to be distributed so unequally, to try and exercise the Virtues of Men in several Ways; the Faith and Patience of the Poor, the Contentedness of those in a middle Condition, the Charity and Bounty of the Rich.

We have all Reason to confess the Utility of that Order God has set among Men; and even he that bears the most despicable Place in it, is certainly infinitely more happy by contributing to that general Harmony, than he could be in any State of Discord.

We forget that we are all Servants to the same Master, and that he is to appoint in what Office we shall serve him: How should we like it in any of our own Families, to have an inferior Officer leave his Work undone, because he hath more Mind to be *Major domo*? Yet this Insolence we every Day repeat towards God; sullenly dispute his Orders; and unless we may chuse our own Employments, will do nothing.

No Being can know how to govern the World, who does not know how to make it; and

and he who does not know how to govern the World himſelf, is a very unfit Judge of the Wiſdom of Providence; for he can never know when the World is well and wiſely governed, becauſe he does not know what belongs to the Government of the World.

He that looks upon all Things as coming from ſecond Cauſes, and does not eye the firſt Cauſe, the good and wiſe Governor, will be apt to take Offence at every croſs and unwelcome Accident: Men are apt to be angry, when one flings Water upon them as they paſs in the Streets; but no Man is offended, if he is wet by Rain from Heaven.

The promiſcuous Diſtribution of the good and evil Things of this World, both to good and to bad Men, proves that Proſperity is not always good, nor Adverſity always evil; that Proſperity is rather a preſent Encouragement, than the proper Reward of Virtue; and external Calamities rather a Curb and Reſtraint, than the proper Puniſhment of Vice; and therefore, when God can ſerve the Ends of his Providence by it, he may make bad Men proſperous, and afflict the good: Now, if the Happineſs and Miſeries of this Life be not the proper, and peculiar, and inſeparable Rewards and Puniſhments of Virtue and Vice, then there are ſome other Rewards and Puniſhments reſerved for good and bad Men in the next World, ſuch Rewards as no bad Man ſhall ſhare in, and ſuch Puniſhments as ſhall not be inflicted on any good Man.

When the Tares are more than the Wheat, grow cloſe together, and are entangled in each other, as the Intereſts of good and bad Men are intermix'd and interwoven in this World, there is great Reaſon to ſpare the Tares for the ſake of the Wheat.

The

The Nature of a reaſonable Creature, of Virtue and Vice, of Rewards and Puniſhments, repreſent it as very becoming the Wiſdom and Juſtice of God to leave every Man to the Freedom of his own Choice, to do Good or Evil, to deſerve Rewards or Puniſhments, as far as he himſelf is only concerned in it; but when we conſider Man in Society the Caſe is altered: For when the Good or Evil of their Actions extend beyond themſelves, to do Good or Hurt to other Men, the Providence of God becomes concerned, either to hinder, or to permit and order it, as may beſt ſerve the wiſe Ends of Government, as thoſe other Men, who are like to be the better or the worſe for it, have deſerved well or ill of God.

We muſt neceſſarily diſtinguiſh between the Evils Men do, and the Evils they ſuffer; the Firſt God permits and directs, the Second he orders and appoints.

We may ſafely attribute all Events to God's Order and Appointment, without danger of charging God with the Sins of Men, whereby ſuch Events are brought to paſs.

What is intended by Men is Their Doing, what is intended by God is His Doing, and wholly His Doing, when what God intended was not intended by Men. The ſending *Joſeph* into *Egypt*, and advancing him to *Pharaoh*'s Throne, was God's Doing, but not the Sin of his Brethren in ſelling him for a Slave; all wicked Actions are Mens own Will, and own Doings, which God permits for wiſe Ends, but never orders or appoints; but the Good or Evil which is done by Mens Sins, that is God's Doing.

Tho' God over-rules the Actions of Men, to do what he himſelf thinks fit to be done; yet he lays no Neceſſity upon human Actions; Men will

will and chuſe freely, purſue their own Intereſts and Inclinations, juſt as they would do if there were no Providence to govern them; tho' they may be reſtrained from doing ſo much Wickedneſs as they would, yet all the Wickedneſs they commit is their own free Choice, even when it ſerves ſuch Ends as they never thought of; and therefore they are and act like free Agents, notwithſtanding the Government of Providence.

Should God make ſuch a viſible Difference between all good and bad Men in this World, that all good Men ſhould be proſperous and happy, and all bad Men miſerable, there would be no more Choice left to Men whether they would be good or bad, than whether they would ſpend their Lives in Health or Sickneſs, in Riches or Poverty, in Honour or Diſgrace; but where the Event is not certain, there is Room left for wiſe Conſideration, for Hopes and Fears, which are the natural Springs of a free Choice.

Juſtice does not oblige God always to favour a juſt Cauſe, when thoſe who have a juſt Cauſe deſerve to be puniſhed.

God hath oftentimes ſuffered a wicked Nation to be proſperous, to ſcourge their wicked Neighbours; but he never ſuffers a truly righteous and religious Nation to be oppreſſed.

If the Reward of Virtue, and the Puniſhment of Vice, were always viſible and preſent, there would be no Room left for Faith in God, which is a firm Belief of the Truth of his Promiſes and Threatenings, tho' we do not ſee a preſent Performance of them.

God is not willing to exert his Omnipotence to put a Stop to Sin, ſince he requires a free Obedience; nor is it agreeable to his Wiſdom, by an Almighty Power to prevent that Sin to be committed, which he hath forbidden by threatening the ſevereſt Puniſhment;

niſhment; beſides, it would reflect upon the divine Glory, if he had no Volunteers in his Service, but only ſuch as were forced to obey by an Almighty Power; whereas Satan hath a great many Slaves and Vaſſals, made ſo by their own free Will.

If the natural Power of acting chargeth God with Mens Sins, the Charge lieth equally againſt a creating and co-operating Power; if it does not, God is no more chargeable with Sin for co-operating with Mens natural Powers in every Action, than he would be for creating ſuch natural Powers as could act of themſelves.

God never ſuggeſts any evil Deſigns to Men; that is owing to their own wicked Hearts, or to the Temptation of other wicked Men, or of wicked Spirits; but when Men have formed any wicked Deſigns, he ſometimes changes their Purpoſes, or deters them from putting them in Execution; and when he ſuffers them to proceed to Action, he either ſhamefully diſappoints them, or ſerves ſome wiſe and good End by what they wickedly do.

Tho' God may ſometimes by a ſupernatural Power influence the Minds of Men, and chain up their Luſts and Paſſions, yet this is not the natural Government of Mankind, conſidered as free Agents; and it would no more become God always to over-rule Men's Wills in this Manner, than it would, always to over-power Nature, and to govern the natural World, not by its natural Virtues and Powers, but by conſtant Miracles.

The divine Providence could not have taken a more effectual Courſe to diſcourage Wickedneſs, than to make all Mankind ſenſible of the Evil of Sin, by making them all at one Time or

other feel the Evil of Sin, in what they ſuffer by their own or other Mens Sins.

The wiſe Government of the World makes no Change in the Nature of Mens Actions, nor in their Deſerts; God himſelf will puniſh their Wickedneſs, tho' he ſerves wiſe Ends by it, and hath commanded Men to do ſo; for no Man ſins by the Will of God, tho' no Man ſuffers any Thing but by God's Will.

God never permits, that we ſhould be under an Obligation to offend him, and to tranſgreſs his Law; and there is no neceſſary and unavoidable Sin.

To fear God, and to ſtand in awe of his Juſtice, to truſt and depend on him in all Conditions, to ſubmit patiently to his Will under all Afflictions, to pray to him for the Supply of our Wants, for the Relief of our Sufferings, for Protection and Defence, to love and praiſe him for the Bleſſings we enjoy, for Peace, and Plenty, and Health, for Friends and Benefactors, and all proſperous Succeſſes; I ſay theſe are not the Acts of reaſonable Men, unleſs we believe that God hath the ſupreme Diſpoſal of all Events, and takes a particular Care of us.

When we contemplate God, it is like loſing ourſelves in a boundleſs Proſpect, where we ſee a great many Glories and Beauties, but cannot ſee to the End of it: We may diſcover admirable and ſurprizing Wiſdom in that little we ſee of Providence; but we know ſo Little of what has been done in the World, and by what Means it was done, and what Ends it ſerved, that it is no Wonder if we have as imperfect a View of the Wiſdom of Providence, as we have of the Hiſtory of the World.

Had we a certain and particular Hiſtory of what God has already done, and could we certainly underſtand the Prophecies of what is ſtill

to

to be done in every Age, and in all ſucceeding Ages, ſo that we could have one View of Providence from the Beginning to the End; we ſhould be more competent Judges of the Wiſdom, Beauty and Juſtice of Providence.

It had been indeed more for the Peace and Quiet of the World, that all Mankind had been but one People, and one Kingdom, without divided Intereſts and Governments; but ſuch a profound State of Eaſe is apt to looſen the Reins of Government, and to corrupt Mens Minds with Sloth and Luxury; and therefore is no more fit for a corrupt and degenerate State, than it would have been, that the Earth ſhould have brought forth Fruit of itſelf, without human Labour and Induſtry.

Were all Men equally rich and great, there would be neither Subjects nor Servants; for no Man will chuſe to be a Subject or a Servant, who hath an equal Title to be a Lord and Maſter; and then no Man could be rich and great, which are only comparative Terms, and, which is worſe than that, no Man could be ſafe.

God can no more make an independent Creature, which can ſubſiſt without him, than he can make an Eternal Creature which ſhall have no Beginning; which is not want of Power in God, but a Repugnancy and Contradiction in the Nature of Creatures; that which once was not, can never be ſo made as to have no Beginning; that which has not a neceſſary Exiſtence, (as nothing has which once was not) cannot be made to exiſt neceſſarily without Dependence on its Cauſe; becauſe neceſſary Exiſtence is not in its Nature, for then it would always have been.

When Men complain of the Uncertainty and Inſtability of Fortune, as they call it, they complain of they know not what; and were it put to

their own Choice what to have in the Room of it, they would not know how to mend the Matter; the wiſe Government of free Agents, who ſo often change themſelves, requires very frequent, ſudden, ſurprizing Turns of Providence; the Reaſons of which muſt of Neceſſity be as inviſible to us, as the Thoughts of Mens Hearts, and their moſt ſecret Intrigues and Counſels.

CHAP. XXI.

Of our Truſt in GOD, and in his Promiſes.

ALL Truſt in God, and Dependence upon his Providence, does imply that we join Prayer and Endeavour together, Faith in God, and a prudent and diligent Uſe of Means; if we lazily truſt the Providence of God, and ſo caſt all our Care upon him as to take none at all ourſelves, God will take no Care of us.

To truſt Providence, is not to truſt in God, that he will do that particular Thing for us which we deſire; but to truſt ourſelves and all our Concernments with God, to do for us, in every particular Caſe, which we recommend to his Care, what he ſees beſt and fitteſt for us in ſuch Caſes.

TRUST in God, refers our Cauſe to him to judge for us, and to do what he ſees fit; and we have God's Word and Promiſe for it, that if we do truſt in him, he will take Care of us, that we ſhall want nothing that is good, and ſhall be delivered from all Evil.

WOULD

Would we desire any thing else, or can we wish for any Thing better than what infinite Wisdom and Goodness can do for us? or would we have any Thing, which infinite Wisdom and Goodness does not think fit to give us?

It is much more for our Good, that God should chuse for us, than we for ourselves; even as it is much more for the Child's Good to have the Parent chuse for it, than to be left to those silly Choices it would make for itself; how many times would it cut, and burn, and mischief itself, if it might have every Thing it desires? Thus many times we wish for Wealth, and Honour, and Beauty, and the like, when, if we had them, they would only prove Snares to us.

All wise Men are greatly satisfied and pleased to see the probable Means and Instruments of their Safety and Defence, because God ordinarily works by Means; but good Men know, that they are but Instruments in God's Hands, and no wise Man puts his Trust in the Instruments, be they never so good, but in the Workman.

None can be supposed indeed to trust on the living God, but those who by sincere Piety qualify themselves for his Protection.

To rely on God for the Performance of his Promise, does Honour to his Truth and Faithfulness; but to trust God to chuse our Condition for us, to do for us either what we desire, or what he likes better, argues such an intire Dependence on God, and an absolute Resignation to his Will, with a perfect Assurance of his Wisdom and Goodness, that it is impossible a Creature can express a greater Veneration for the divine Perfections.

Till we have performed the Conditions upon which God hath promised any Blessing to us, we

have no more Right to the Promiſe, than if it had never been made.

TEMPORAL Bleſſings are not abſolutely promiſed in the new Covenant to the Godly, but only under this Condition, that they be not prejudicial to the promoting of the Glory of God, their own Salvation, and the Edification of others.

THE abundant Reward God is pleaſed to promiſe to good Men, the Promiſe of it is founded in his Goodneſs, and the Performance of that Promiſe in his Juſtice; for it is Juſtice to perform what he promiſeth, tho' the Promiſe of ſo great and abundant a Reward was mere Goodneſs.

THERE are four different Sorts of Promiſes of God; ſome are abſolute, ſome are conditional, whoſe Condition we know to be fulfilled; ſome are conditional, whoſe Condition we know not to be fulfilled; yet, there are again conditional Promiſes, whoſe Condition we do not know whether it be fulfilled or no; the two former produce an abſolute Truſt, the two latter only a conditional one.

CHAP. XXII.

Concerning God's Hardening of Men, and ſome other ſuch-like Expreſſions to be met with in Scripture.

WHEN the wicked Actions of Blinding, Hardening, and others of the like Nature, are attributed to God, they do not imply any real

real Efficiency of ſpiritual Blindneſs, but only a certain penal Act, which God exerciſeth towards Sinners for the Offences they have committed, which, by the Hardneſs of their Hearts, they perverſely lay hold of, and turn into an Occaſion of Sinning.

God, as an incenſed Judge, blinds and hardens Men for their paſt, or even preſent Tranſgreſſions, not indeed by effecting of Blindneſs, or infuſing of Wickedneſs, or hardening a Man phyſically, ſo as that he could not avoid Sinning; for then he would be the Author of Sin, which is repugnant to his Holineſs; but by diſpenſing his Grace after a wonderful Manner, and exerciſing his ſevere Judgments, ſo as that a Man, through the Malice of his own Heart, takes an Occaſion from thence of hardening himſelf; whereas, on the contrary, had he any Love to Piety, he would from the very ſame Act of God be moved to Repentance; for, according to the different Tempers and Diſpoſitions of Men, one and the ſame Act of God hath different Effects.

God never hardens any Men till they have deſerved, and he is reſolved to deſtroy them; and then he does not harden them in Sin, but in ſuch ruinous Counſels as their own Sins betray them to: All this is done not by the natural or moral Efficacy, but by their own wicked Abuſe of the divine Providence; to compleat all, when God hath thus determined to deſtroy any Perſon or People, he many times inflicts upon them a penal Blindneſs and Infatuation, not to ſee the Things which concern their Peace.

God did not infuſe any Wickedneſs or Obſtinacy into *Pharaoh*; but by his juſt Judgments ſent more Plagues upon him, which hardned him yet more, and which were likely to have that

Effect upon him, conſidering the ill Temper of the Man.

When Men are ſaid to harden themſelves, as *Pharaoh* is often ſaid to harden his own Heart; and yet God is ſaid to harden them, there can be no other Account given of it, but this, That Men take Occaſion from what God does, take Occaſion where no Occaſion was given, to harden themſelves, as St. *Paul* obſerveth the *Jews* did, from God's Patience and long Suffering.

That Hardening, which is the Effect of God's Decree, to puniſh or deſtroy, relates only to ſome temporal Evils and Calamities, which God intends to bring on them, not to the eternal Miſeries of the next World; God is never ſaid to harden any Men, that he may eternally damn them.

When it is ſaid, That God hath deceived the Prophets, the Senſe is not, That God deceived them to propheſy Lies, but that God deceived in the Event, by bringing thoſe Evils on them, which they with great Aſſurance and Confidence ſaid ſhould never come.

When it is ſaid, That God moved *David* to number the People, we learn in what Senſe this is attributed to God, from what is expreſly ſaid, *Chron.* xxxi. 1. that Satan provoked *David* to do it; the Meaning then is, That God, in Anger againſt *Iſrael*, ſuffered Satan to tempt *David* to number them.

When *David* ſaid, God had bidden *Shimei* to curſe him, all that he meant by it, is no more but this, That the ſad Calamity which the Providence of God had brought on him by the Rebellion of his Son *Abſalom*, had given free Scope to *Shimei*'s old and inveterate Hatred of him, and as effectually let looſe his reviling Tongue, as if God had in expreſs Words commanded him

to

to curse *David*; for bad Men will take all the Advantages which the Providence of God gives them, to reproach, and scorn, and persecute the Good; there needs no other Command for this, but a fair Opportunity to do it.

Those Places of Scripture, wherein God is said to repent him of Evils threatened, signify thus much, That God does not execute that which seemed to us to have been his peremptory Purpose and Resolution; that is, he is pleased to do otherwise than his Threatening seemed openly to express, because of some tacit Condition implied in it, which he did not think fit to acquaint us with.

CHAP. XXIII.

Concerning Divine Grace.

WHEN God speaks as if he did all in the great Work of the Conversion, we are to judge that he supposeth Mens Endeavours; and when he speaks as if Men were to do all, that he supposeth the Concurrence and Assistance of his own Grace: The Grace of God is necessary to the Conversion of a Sinner; but Experience and the Scripture tell us, That we can co-operate with the Grace of God; so *Phil.* ii. 12, 13.

God's Grace was never designed to countenance the Sloth and Negligence of Men, but to encourage and second our Resolutions and Endeavours of Well-doing. If we expect God's Grace and Assistance upon other Terms, we tempt God, and provoke him to leave us to the Power of

of Temptations, to be drawn away and enticed by our own Lusts.

God hath not thought fit to force Happiness upon Men, and to make them wise and good whether they will or no; he presents Men with such Motives, and offers such Arguments to their Consideration, as are fit to prevail with reasonable Men; and is ready to afford them all necessary Assistance, if they be not wanting to themselves, so that no Man hath Reason to charge either his Fault or his Punishment upon God, who sincerely desires our Happiness; but we wilfully ruin ourselves.

If God please to bring any infallibly to Salvation, this is transcendent Goodness; but if he put all others into a Capacity of it, and use all necessary and fitting Means to make them happy, and after all this, any fall short of Happiness, through their own wilful Fault and Obstinacy, these Men are evil and cruel to themselves, but God has been very good and merciful to them.

He that diligently and faithfully employs the first Beginnings of Grace, shall yet have more; and he that in like Manner husbands that more, shall yet have a greater Degree; so that what *Solomon* saith of Temporal Riches, is also true of Spiritual; *The Hand of the Diligent maketh Rich.*

God will withdraw the Grace which he sees neglected; as we see in the Parable, *That the Talent was taken from him that had only hid it in a Napkin, and had brought in no Gain to his Lord.*

When Men obstinately resist the perpetual Motions and Solicitations of the Holy Spirit, he withdraws from them, and giveth them up to their own Counsels, as we leave off persuading those, who will not be persuaded.

When,

When God seeth, that all the Means which he can use, do prove ineffectual, and to no Purpose, he will then give over a People, as Physicians do their Patients, when they see that Nature is spent, and their Case past Remedy.

This is the Rule and Method of God's Grace; he forceth Truth on no Man, but those who love the Truth shall find it; but if Men wilfully shut their own Eyes against the Light, God suffers the God of this World to blind them.

God deals with Men as with reasonable Creatures, and therefore ought to work upon them by Motives or Objects proposed to them, and not by a blind Impulse; and to ask, why Men are govern'd that Way, is to ask, why they are Men.

The Nature of a free Obedience requires, that Man should not be necessarily carried out to what is good, but have Power either of transgressing or obeying the Law; else his Obedience would be no Obedience.

God cannot be properly said to aid and assist those who do nothing themselves.

In many of the first Converts to Christianity, the Spirit of God did work very miraculously, as well as in the Cures of bodily Diseases; but to make this the Rule and Standard of God's ordinary Proceedings in the Conversion of Men, is equally unreasonable, as still to expect Miracles for the Cure of Diseases.

The Assistance of God's Grace does not lay any Constraint upon a Man to do what is good; but only bestows upon him a Power of Working, and is the very Principle of all Operation, without destroying Man's free Will, much less does the divine Permission force a Man to sin.

When God requireth Obedience under the Threatening of the severest Punishment, he is likewise

wiſe bound in Juſtice and Equity to beſtow on Man ſufficient Abilities for the obſerving of the Law, not becauſe he is obliged to Man, but to the Equity and Rectitude of his own Nature.

'Tis certain God denieth Grace to no Man, unleſs it be for his own Demerit.

That God does not beſtow an equal Meaſure of Grace upon all, cannot be denied, ſince he beſtowed it in a greater Degree on the Apoſtles, on St. *Paul*, and on *Cornelius*, than on others; yet we cannot think, that even that Degree of Grace was ſo great, but it might have been hindred in its Operation by Obſtinacy and Unbelief; hence it is, that St. *Paul* ſaith of himſelf, That he was not diſobedient to the heavenly Viſion, and that he conferred not with Fleſh and Blood: And that he was not free from the Danger of Revolting, unleſs he took Care of himſelf, is plain from his own Words; *I keep under my Body, and bring it under Subjection, leſt that by any Means, when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a Caſtaway.*

'Tis ſaid of the *Jews*, *Acts* vii. 51. *That they always reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt*; ſo that ſome Operations of God's Grace and Holy Spirit are reſiſtible, and ſuch as, if Men did not reſiſt them, would be effectual to bring them to Faith and Repentance, as appears by *Luke* xix. 42. *John* v. 40. *Matth.* xi. 21.

How is it Grace to offer Mercy to thoſe upon their Repentance, who are out of a Poſſibility of Repenting, without that Grace which God is reſolved not to afford them, and to puniſh them more ſeverely for their Impenitency after this Offer made to them? If this be the Caſe, it had been happier for Mankind, that the Grace of God had not appeared to all Men, but only to thoſe who

who shall irresistibly be made Partakers of the Benefit of it.

If no Man does nor can repent without such a Degree of God's Grace as cannot be resisted, no Man's Repentance is commendable, nor is one Man's Impenitence more blameable than another's: *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* can be in no more Fault for continuing impenitent, than *Tyre* and *Sidon* were: For either this irresistible Grace is afforded to Men, or not; if it be, their Repentance is necessary, and they cannot help it; if it be not, their Repentance is impossible, and consequently their Impenitence is necessary, and they cannot help it neither.

When God is said to work in us both to will and to do, he is not said to do it by an irresistible Power; there are several Modes of doing any Thing, which are not all of them so effectual as never to fail of their End; thus he who perswadeth and excites a Man by Gifts and Promises, works in him to will and to do; but yet the other may despise his Exhortations and Promises.

When God giveth Men a Power of Believing and Repenting, he is truly said to grant them Faith and Repentance, since 'tis all he on his Part is required to give; and when a Man makes a right Use of the Strength granted him, then the Gift becomes effectual; however this Effect is not so necessarily annexed to the divine Gift, but that a Man may reject this Offer, and spurn at the divine Grace; the writing the Law in our Hearts, is effected by the clear proposing of the divine Word, and by the Greatness of the Blessings whereby God does so powerfully prevail upon Men, that they freely and chearfully give themselves up wholly to his Service; the divine Drawing is that Action of God, whereby he dis-

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poseth and prepares Men after such a Manner, that they may come to Christ whenever the Gospel is preached to them.

Grace is the primary Cause of Faith in Man, tho' it be not the sole Cause; the Co-operation of the free Will, as stirred up by the preventing Grace of God, is requisite; else there could be no such Thing as Obedience or Disobedience in Man.

The same Grace is styled Sufficient and Efficacious upon the Account of its different Respects; it is Sufficient, because it is capable of producing the Effect; and Efficacious, because it hath really produced its Effect.

If Grace be not able to master the Incapacity of Man, be it natural, or be it moral, then it is not sufficient to bring Men to Salvation; and thus the Grace called sufficient is rendred really insufficient.

When it is said, *To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he seems to have*; it appears plainly from the Scope of the Parable, that the Meaning is, That to him that useth that Grace, and those Advantages which God affords him, more shall be given; but from him that maketh no Use of them, and therefore is as if he had them not, that which he but seems to have shall be taken away.

The internal Vocation is that which is done by the Spirit of God, which influences the Hearts of Men, moving, exciting and stirring them up to obey the outward Call made to them by the Word: An Instance of this we have in *Lydia*, whose Heart God is said to have opened, that she might attend to the Things told her by *Paul*. However, this inward Call is not a Power of the Spirit operating apart from the Word, as being always

always in it; ſo that really 'tis but one and the ſame Vocation, only with reſpect of its ſeveral Ways of winning upon Men, 'tis uſually divided into the external and internal Call, the one reaching our Ears, the other affecting and prevailing upon our Hearts.

It is true, that the Holy Ghoſt ſeals us unto the Day of Redemption; but it is in the ſame Manner, and upon the ſame Condition, by which God promiſeth Redemption to us, *viz.* if we perſevere in the Faith unto the End; for this Sealing ought exactly to correſpond to the Contract to which it is applied: As therefore God has no-where promiſed the Faithful, that they ſhall finally perſevere; but only, that if they perſevere, they ſhould attain everlaſting Life; ſo likewiſe the Holy Ghoſt, which is given to us as the Seal of the divine Promiſes, does not aſſure us, that we ſhall always abide in the Faith; but only renders us certain of the Favour of God, ſo long as we do remain in the Faith; upon this Account it is, that the Apoſtle admoniſheth us not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

When it is ſaid, That the Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance, it is to be underſtood of thoſe Gifts which depend wholly upon the Will of God, and are beſtowed by him on Man, without the Stipulation of any Duty to be performed on Man's Part; of which Nature are the ſending of Chriſt as the Saviour of the World, his calling us to partake of the heavenly Grace, with the like; and not of thoſe which God is not pleaſed to beſtow upon Man, without the Intervention of his free Obedience, as a pre-requiſite Condition for the obtaining of thoſe Bleſſings: And of this Nature are Adoption, Remiſſion of Sins, eternal Life.

Put the Case a Pardon is offered to two Malefactors; the one accepts, the other refuseth it; their own Choice maketh the Difference between them; but he that is saved is nevertheless beholden to the Clemency of his Prince who offered it to him, when he no-wise deserved it; so it is with the Grace of God offered to Sinners.

The Operations of God's Grace require Time, as well as those of Nature.

A middle Opinion, and which is most agreeable to the Tenour of Scripture, and to the best Notions which Men have concerning the Attributes and Perfections of God, concerning the Operation of God's Grace in the Conversion of a Sinner, is, that some are converted in an irresistible Manner, when God pleaseth, and that sufficient Grace is afforded to others, which is effectual to the Salvation of many, and rejected by a great many.

CHAP. XXIV.

Concerning Man's Free Will.

God hath promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; and it is naturally in every Man's Power to ask it, otherwise the Promise signifieth nothing; for, if no Man can ask the Spirit of God till he first have it, then to promise it to them that ask it, is to promise it to them that have it already, and then 'tis needless to ask it.

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To use our sincere Endeavours, is nothing else but to do as much as we can; and it is Nonsense for a Man to deny that he can do as much as he can; and if we would do thus much, if we would but seek Heaven with the same Ardour, and Affection, and Vigour of Prosecution, as we do earthly Things, we are sure of God's Grace and Assistance, which is never wanting to [illegible] Endeavours of Men: But Men expect Happiness should drop into their Laps, without any Design and Endeavour on their Part.

The true Liberty of the Will consists in an active Indifference, whereby, having all Things requisite for Action, it may act or not act, and may do this rather than that; and this Liberty is so far essential to the Will, that Man had it not only in a State of Innocence, but has it in every State and Condition whatsoever, the State of Sin not excepted; for Sin, as it is an Act of a free Power, cannot destroy the Power of the Will; because, by its Inordinacy, 'tis not contrary to the Liberty of the Will, but to Virtue.

They cannot, in any Propriety of Speech, be said to be guilty, who have not the Power of avoiding the Sin; but he is properly guilty, who, when it was in his Power to have avoided Sin, yet made Choice of it by his own free and voluntary Act.

The universal Voice of natural Conscience pleads for the Liberty of the Will; 'tis Conscience that tells every Man, that he has a Principle of Action lodged in himself; that he has a Power of committing or omitting that Action; and if he begun, he may either continue or forbear such Action, and therefore applauds and absolveth him for having done well, but accuseth and condemneth him for having done ill.

God intreats, wiſheth, and importunes Men to receive the Word, and be obedient thereto; which argues, that they who reject the Word, might have embraced it, unleſs we would charge God with Diſſimulation, in importuning Men to do that which he is pleaſed they ſhould never be capable of doing: On the one Side, they who reject the Word, are ſeverely reproved as the Authors of their own Deſtruction, and God expoſtulates the Caſe with them; whereas, on the contrary, they who embrace it, are highly commended.

Tho' we cannot do all by our own ſingle Strength, yet we can do ſo much as will oblige our bleſſed Maſter to enable us to do all; and therefore that we do not do all, is as much our Fault as if we could; becauſe we are able to do all through Chriſt, who will ſtrengthen us, if we will but do what we can.

We ſee that the Threatenings of an eaſy Puniſhment, or the Promiſe of a ſmall Reward, will make Men find a Will to abſtain from ſeveral Sins, which they would not be kept from by all the Threatenings and Promiſes in the Book of God.

I would ask a Man, who pretends Impoſſibility of leaving the Cuſtom of Swearing, whether, if he were ſure he ſhould be hanged the next Oath he ſwore, the Fear of it would not keep him from Swearing; and ſurely Damning is ſo much worſe than Hanging, that in all Reaſon the Fear of that ought to be a much greater Reſtraint.

Every Man is naturally inveſted with a Power to conſider, and judge, and chuſe; to conſider, that is, to weigh and compare Things together; to judge, that is, to determine which is beſt; to

chuſe,

chuſe, that is, to reſolve to do it or not; that is univerſally acknowledged in temporal Caſes: And as to ſpiritual Things, every Man hath the ſame Power radically; that is, he hath the Faculties of Underſtanding and Will; but they are obſtructed and hindered in their Exerciſe, and ſtrongly byaſſed a contrary Way, by the Power of evil Inclinations and Habits.

'Tis too true, that the Nature of Man is ſadly corrupted and depraved; but not ſo bad, as by vicious Practices and Habits, it may be made; an unregenerate Man is not neceſſarily as bad as is poſſible, as a regenerate one is not neceſſarily as good.

If *to be dead* in *Sin*, ſignifieth an utter Impotency to Goodneſs; then *to be dead* to *Sin*, muſt, on the contrary, ſignify an Impoſſibility of ſinning.

It will be a hard Matter to convince Men that any Thing is their Duty, which, at the ſame Time, we declare to them to be out of their Power.

That is poſſible to us, which we may do by the Aſſiſtance of another, if we may have that Aſſiſtance for asking; and God hath promiſed to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.

Tho' Men cannot convert themſelves, yet they may conſider what is preparatory to Converſion; for the Will may turn the Thoughts of the Mind to any Sort of Objects.

It is plain from Scripture, that God propounds to Men ſeveral Motives and Arguments to Obedience; ſome proper to work upon their Fears, as the Threatenings of Puniſhment; ſome upon their Hopes, as the Promiſes of Bleſſings and Rewards; others upon their Love, as the Mercies and Forgiveneſs of God: From whence it

is evident, he intended they ſhould all work upon us.

It is no impoſſible Task to perform our Duty to God, ourſelves, and our Neighbour, in ſuch a Meaſure as God will graciouſly accept; that is, in Sincerity, tho' not in Perfection: He requireth nothing of us, which he is not ready, by his Grace, to enable us to perform, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, either in asking it by Prayer, or in uſing it by Diligence.

As our Labour is vain without God's Bleſſing, ſo the Bleſſing of God does not fall but upon our Labour, and does nothing, if we leave him all to do.

We muſt take great Heed, that while we endeavour to make God to do all in the Converſion of Sinners, we do not by this Means, charge upon him the Ruin and Deſtruction of impenitent Sinners.

That our Wills ſometimes contradict and diſobey the Dictates of our Underſtandings, appears by that we find that we are able to do what we know ought not to be done, and to omit what we are aſſured we ought to do.

No Permiſſion ought to be aſcribed to God, which introduceth, in any Nature whatſoever, a Neceſſity of ſinning; but only ſuch a Permiſſion, as not only allows free Will to Man, but likewiſe a free Uſe of it; for Liberty, when reſtrained from being uſed, is no Liberty: To make a Man therefore truly the Cauſe of Sin, and juſtly liable to Puniſhment, 'tis neceſſary that no divine Action ſhould render Sin inevitable, or impoſſible to be avoided by him.

Foreknowledge lays no greater Neceſſity upon that which is foreknown, than Knowledge does upon that which is known; and Knowledge

ledge is not the Cauſe of that which is known, much leſs the neceſſary Cauſe of it: We certainly know at what Time the Sun will riſe and ſet every Day in the Year; but our Knowledge is not the Cauſe of the Sun's Riſing or Setting: Could we certainly know what all Men would do before they do it; yet it is evident, that this would never make nor prove them neceſſary Agents: Foreknowledge is not owing to the Neceſſity, but to the Perfection of Knowledge.

It muſt be granted, that nothing can be certainly foreknown, but what will certainly be; but not that nothing will certainly be, but what hath a neceſſary Cauſe: That Man underſtands very little, who knows not the Difference between the Neceſſity and the Certainty of an Event; no Event is neceſſary, but that which hath a neceſſary Cauſe, as the Riſing or Setting of the Sun; but every Event is certain which will certainly be, tho' it be produced by a Cauſe which acts freely: Now, if that which is done freely may be certain, and that which is certain may be certainly known, then the Certainty of God's Foreknowledge only proves the Certainty, but not the Neceſſity of the Event; and then God may foreknow all Events, and yet lay no Neceſſity on Mankind, to do any thing that is wicked.

That God's Foreknowledge is not owing to a Neceſſity of the Event, and therefore cannot prove any ſuch Neceſſity, is evident from hence, that the Scripture, which attributes this Foreknowledge to God, does alſo aſſert the Liberty of human Actions; chargeth Mens Sins, and final Ruin, on themſelves; ſets before them Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing: Now, how difficult ſoever it may be to reconcile Preſcience

and Liberty, it is certain, that Neceſſity and Liberty can never be reconciled.

If a Man be ſure that all the Pains he takes will be loſt, he will rather chuſe to wait for the irreſiſtible Operation of God, than to weary himſelf in a vain and fruitleſs Endeavour.

CHAP. XXV.

Concerning Election and Reprobation.

THE Predeſtination of God is that Decree, whereby, before all Worlds, he decreed that they who believed in his Son Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould be elected, adopted as Sons, juſtified, and upon their Perſeverance in Faith, ſhould be glorified; and on the contrary, that the Unbelievers and Obſtinate ſhould be reprobated, blinded, harden'd, and if they continue impenitent, ſhould be damned for ever: The Foundation of this Decree is Jeſus Chriſt, in whom we are choſen; becauſe God, in his Predeſtination, looks upon Men either as Believers or Unbelievers in Chriſt Jeſus.

'Tis a Contradiction to ſay, that God decreed Salvation and Damnation unconditionally, and afterwards preſcribed the Conditions and Terms of both.

Conditional Promiſes and Threatenings are inconſiſtent with an abſolute Decree; for then God would offer Salvation to ſome under the Condition of believing, whom he had reprobated by his abſolute Decree; and would threaten others with

with Death and Damnation upon the Account of Infidelity, whom, by the ſaid Decree, he had elected to Salvation; neither of which are conſiſtent with the divine Veracity and Sincerity, but overthrow all Certainty of the conditional Promiſes of God.

To maintain that God, in the Election of Men to eternal Salvation, hath a Regard to the Faith and good Works of him whom he elects, does not deſtroy divine Grace; the very Decree of ſaving Men, and calling Men to Salvation, being intirely the Work of God's Goodneſs; no Merit is aſſerted, ſince Remiſſion of Sins and preventing Grace, without which no ſaving Work could be performed, is acknowledged; here only the Condition required by God in order to Salvation is urged, not as a Merit, but as an indiſpenſable Duty, without the Performance of which, God will not make us the Heirs of eternal Glory; this is not to deſtroy the divine Grace, or to magnify ourſelves, but the working out of our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.

That Election is ſubſequent to our Faith and Obedience; and conſequently, that a Believer, as ſuch, is the Object of Election, appears from all thoſe Places, wherein Faith and Repentance are required as Conditions of Salvation.

Tho' there ſometimes occur ſingular Decrees of God, with reſpect to ſome particular Things, yet, in the Caſe of everlaſting Salvation, no Mention is made of any ſpecial Decree, but what is an Application of the general Decree, unleſs it be as to the Sending of Jeſus Chriſt to be the Saviour of the World; of whom indeed 'tis peculiarly ſaid, that he was fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World: As to others, the Decrees run in the general; he that

believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.

The general Decrees of God can never be altered or diſannulled; whereas the particular Decrees are ſo often altered, as there is a Change made in Man, to whom the general Decree is applied; and this Alteration is not on God's, but on Man's Part, ſo that the Purpoſe of God ſtandeth ſure and fixed.

It muſt be noted, that Election is either to Grace or to Glory; for tho' theſe are Terms nowhere to be found in holy Writ, yet they have ſome ſort of Foundation therein. Election denotes a Separation of one Thing or Perſon from another, no matter whether there be any Ground for ſuch an Election either in the one or the other. In Scripture Election ſignifieth an actual Allotment to ſome Privilege which others want, and is either of a whole Nation to ſome certain Prerogative above the reſt, in which Senſe the *Iſraelites* are ſaid to be the choſen People of God, or of particular Perſons, *1ſt*, To ſome extraordinary Office, as was the Election of *Saul* and *David* to the Kingdom, of *Aaron* to the Prieſthood, and of the Twelve to the Apoſtleſhip. *2dly*, To ſome temporal Favour, and extraordinary Privileges, in which Senſe *Jacob* and his Poſterity were elected and preferred before *Eſau* and his Family. *3dly*, To a ſpiritual and heavenly Grace, in which Senſe all thoſe who are called by the Goſpel to the Participation of eternal Happineſs, are ſaid to be elected, and that upon theſe two Accounts: Firſt, becauſe they are called out of the common Herd of Mankind, and ſeparated by God to his particular Service; and, Secondly, upon the Account of their former State, whom God permitted to walk in their own Ways, but now does he call upon

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all Men every where to repent: But whereas God intends, that thoſe whom he calls, ſhould attain to ſome certain End, which they cannot attain without a free Obedience and Faith; therefore they who have obtained that End, are in the moſt proper Senſe ſtyled *the Elect*. They therefore are elected to Glory, whoſe Election is confirmed by Faith; and this is done in Time, and is ſubſequent to our Faith, nor can any Text be produced to the contrary, wherein it is ſaid to be done from all Eternity.

In *Epheſ.* i. ver. 4. *Election* does not denote properly Election to Glory, but Election, or rather the Decree of Election, to Grace; for by it we are choſen to be holy and faithful, God decreeing, before the Foundation of the World, to elect us in Chriſt, *i. e.* to call us to Faith and Holineſs of Life, and by this Means, to the Participation of all ſpiritual and heavenly Bleſſings: If the Apoſtle here meant Election to Glory, it will follow, that Glory is the Means to Grace; for if God hath elected us to Glory, to the end that we might be holy, it follows, that Holineſs, which is uſed to be denoted by the Word Grace, is the End with reſpect to Glory, which is highly abſurd.

When it is ſaid, *Matt.* xx. ver. 16. *That many be called, but few choſen*, it is manifeſt from the foregoing Parable, that the Elect or Choſen are ſo called upon the Account of that Prerogative, whereby the Lord was pleaſed to make them who were laſt equal to the firſt; and ſo *Matt.* xxii. ver. 14. By *the Called*, we are to underſtand thoſe who did not hearken to the Call of God; or, tho' they did profeſs, in ſome meaſure, external Obedience, yet were void of true Faith, and Uprightneſs of Mind; but by the Elect or Choſen, thoſe who obeyed the Call of God, and

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are therefore taken out of, and elected from the reſt, that they may be Partakers of the Marriage Feaſt, *viz.* of everlaſting Life.

The τεταγμένοι, or, *Ordained to eternal Life*, *Acts* xiii. ver. 48. are thoſe, who by the Aſſiſtance of the preventing Grace of God, have diſpoſed themſelves for the embracing of eternal Life, under what Terms ſoever it be propoſed to them by God; and in this Senſe they are very elegantly oppoſed to the unbelieving *Jews*, who judged themſelves unworthy of eternal Life.

The Doctrine of abſolute Predeſtination is apt to beget either carnal Security or Deſpair; it diverts us from the Care we ought to take of living a holy, and avoiding an impious Courſe of Life, and renders the whole Duty of Prayer inſignificant.

What is a Sinner the better for conſidering that Chriſt's Blood is a ſufficient Ranſom for all Men, if it were only ſhed for a few Elect, and himſelf debarred of that Benefit by an antecedent Decree of God?

What ſhould invite a Man to ſtrive for that, from which he knows he is irreverſibly precluded, or elſe ſo infallibly aſcertained of, that his Negligence cannot defeat him?

Actual Reprobation is nothing elſe than a particular Application of the general Decree of damning the Unbelievers, made in Time; whereby God looks upon every Infidel as one that is to be damned, and which he will really damn unleſs he repent: By the *Wicked* and *Unbelievers*, are meant ſuch as reſiſt the Operations of divine Grace, which God makes uſe of for the Converſion of Sinners, or thoſe who commit ſuch Things, as will preclude them from all Hopes of eternal Salvation.

No Man that ſincerely endeavours to pleaſe God, and to keep his Commandments, hath, from

from Scripture, the leaſt Ground to ſuſpect any latent or ſecret Decree of God againſt him, that ſhall work his Ruin; but whatever the Decrees of God be concerning the eternal State of Men, ſince they are ſecret to us, they can certainly be no Rule either of our Duty or Comfort.

Tho' God may put ſome Men under more difficult Circumſtances of becoming good than others, yet he leaves no Man under a fatal Neceſſity of being wicked, and periſhing everlaſtingly.

If God had abſolutely reſolved to make the greateſt Part of Mankind miſerable, without any reſpect to their Actions in this World, he would never have ſaid, That he deſireth that all ſhould be ſaved; he would not have exhorted all Men to work out their own Salvation.

It is not ſaid, that God decreed that *Pilate*, *Herod*, &c. ſhould do what they did, but at moſt, that they did what God had decreed to be done; but beſides the Text, with a ſmall Tranſpoſition of Words, very common in holy Writ, may be ſo read, *Both* Herod *and* Pontius Pilate, *with the* Gentiles *and the People of* Iſrael, *were gathered together againſt thy holy Child Jeſus, whom thou haſt anointed to do whatſoever thy Hand and Counſel determined before to be done.*

No Text of Scripture can be brought, wherein ſuch an Action can be imputed to God, from which Sin is a neceſſary Conſequence.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

Concerning the Heathens Salvation and invincible Ignorance.

GOD indeed no-where promiseth Salvation to them who, without Faith in Christ, live agreeably to the Law of Nature; yet this is no Bar, but that out of his abundant Grace, he may perform more than he hath promised, yet always with respect had to Christ; so that whatever Salvation they may have the Benefit of, it shall be given them for the Sake of Christ.

THO' Infidelity will condemn those Men who have been instructed in the Faith of Christ, and would not believe, yet it cannot, in Reason and Justice, be imputed to those Men who never heard of Christ.

'TIS true, there is no Name under Heaven whereby Men can be saved, but only the Name of Jesus Christ; but 'tis no-where told, that those who never heard of him, cannot be saved by him, without Faith in him; if this be so, what becomes of poor Infants, nay, of all those, except a Prophet or two, that lived before the coming of our Saviour?

EVERY Man, in any Part of the World, who is sincerely good and pious in the Practice of his Duty, so far as it is known to him, shall rather, by an express Revelation, have the rest discovered to him, as in the Instance of *Cornelius*, than that he should be suffered to perish for want of a true Faith, and sufficient Knowledge of his Duty; and

and it is juſt with God, to puniſh thoſe Heathen who ſin without any revealed Law, for their Sins againſt natural Reaſon and Conſcience, and for neglecting to uſe and cultivate their Reaſon, and to improve the Opportunities afforded them of becoming Chriſtians.

THE Being and Providence of God, and the Differences of Good and Evil, are known to all Mankind; Nature teacheth this, and therefore all Mankind are bound to know it, and all Mankind may be judged by this Rule, Whether they know God, and worſhip him as God, and take Care to do that which is good, and to avoid the Evil.

'TIS not to be ſuppoſed that God, in judging the World, will deal more rigorouſly and ſeverely with Heathens, than he will with Chriſtians; and therefore we cannot but hope that Chriſt, in judging of their Works, will make the ſame favourable Allowances to them, which the Goſpel makes to thoſe who do believe in Chriſt; that is to ſay, that he will allow of the Repentance of a Heathen, if it were ſincere and hearty, and did reform his Life, as well as of the Repentance of a Chriſtian; and he will overlook the ſame Defects and Imperfections in the good Actions of Heathens, who lived virtuous Lives, who worſhipped the one true God, and obſerved the natural Rules of Sobriety, Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, that he will in the Actions of Chriſtians.

A Perſon is in no Fault, if he has not done what he never knew, nor could know, to be his Duty.

NOTHING but an invincible Ignorance excuſeth us from Sin; ſome may, without Crime, be ignorant of what others cannot be unacquainted with without Guilt; all Men have not the ſame

Parts,

Parts, Aptneſs to learn, the ſame Leiſure; but every one muſt, as much as in him lieth, ſtudy his own Heart; mind thoſe Sentiments God hath imprinted in it; conſult wiſe and learned Men; long after Truth; pray to God, that he would make him know his Will.

Commonly Ignorance itſelf is a great Crime; and when it is ſo, if Men ſhall not be judged for the Sins which they ignorantly commit, yet they ſhall be judged and condemned for their Ignorance, as well as for their Sins againſt Knowledge; and nothing will excuſe our Ignorance of that which we may know, and which we ought to know.

If the Heathens were ſo inexcuſable for their Ignorance of God, who had no other Help but the Light of Nature, and the viſible Works of God; to be ſure Ignorance muſt be a great Crime in thoſe who live where the Goſpel is preached, and may read the Word of God themſelves, if they pleaſe, and learn their Duty from it.

A great Part of the People are ignorant, and of ſo mean Capacity, as not to be able to judge of the Force of a very good Argument; and ſuch Men are to beg God's Direction, and to rely upon their Teachers, and above all, to live up to the plain Dictates of natural Light, and the clear Commands of God's Word, and this will be their beſt Security; and if the Providence of God hath placed them under ſuch Guides, as do ſeduce them into Error, their Ignorance is invincible, and God will not condemn them for it, ſo long as they ſincerely endeavour to do the Will of God, ſo far as they know it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

Of the Immateriality and Immortality of the Soul.

THE Essence of all Matter must be the same, whether Extension, or any thing else, be assigned as the Essence of it; and tho' we may be ignorant of the Essence of Matter, yet we know it cannot be essential to it to think; for then all Matter would necessarily think; but the Difference in the several Sorts of Matter, can be only in Accidents, that is in Bulk, Rest, Motion, Situation and Figure, none of which can render Matter capable of Thought.

WE can have no more Conception, how any Modification of Matter can produce Thinking, than we can, how any Modification of Sound should produce Seeing.

WE have a Mind to make the human Soul what it is not, by endeavouring to fancy it as a Body; however, it is an easy Matter to know, that the Idea of Body is no ways necessary in the Inquiry after the Nature of the Soul; it is not so, to persuade us that the Soul is a Substance; 'tis enough to that End, that it thinks and acts, since to think and act, one must necessarily be and subsist: The Idea of Body is as little necessary to represent the Thoughts of the Soul, since, on the contrary, all the Attributes, all the Proprieties of a Body, are inconsistent with the Ideas we have of the Nature of Thoughts.

Two

Two Things differ in Nature and Kind, when they have Proprieties, Qualities, and Effects, oppoſite to one another; and when they produce different Ideas, and require different Definitions, to repreſent their Nature and Eſſence: So if we inquire why a Stone is not a Horſe, why Water is not Fire; no other Reaſon can be given, but that the Ideas we have of them are different, they are diverſly defined, their Proprieties, Qualities, and Effects, are unlike, and of a different Nature. Now it is certain, that the Ideas we have of human Mind and Body in general, do differ as well as their Definitions, Proprieties, Attributes, Operations, their Effects, have nothing common, and are quite unlike. We know plainly, that the Eſſence of Body conſiſts in being extended, diviſible, figured, and capable of Motion and Reſt: We know diſtinctly, that the Eſſence of the Mind is to think, to conſider, to reaſon, to judge, and to will; and we likewiſe manifeſtly perceive, that a Thought, Judgment, and Will, include neither Extenſion, Figure, or Diviſibility: It follows then neceſſarily, that the Nature of the Mind differs from the Nature of the Body; that is, that the Mind is not a Body.

That we may not offend the exceſſive Modeſty of ſome Philoſophers, let us grant, that the Nature of the Body, as well as that of the Mind, is not intimately known to us; but at the ſame time they muſt own, that as whatever we know clearly and diſtinctly of the Body, is quite different from all that we know clearly in what we call Mind; it follows, that all our Knowledge and Light requires, that we ſhould believe and ſay, that a Mind is not a Body.

If, without minding the Body, we apply ourſelves to know the Nature of the Mind; we find

find that there is nothing easier to know, or more plain, than the Nature of our Mind; we feel, we know our Ideas, our Thoughts, our Deliberations, our Doubts, our Judgments, our Wills, and we are fully convinced that we feel and know them; but as we build unawares upon that Foundation, that whatever does exist is corporeal and material, and that by Consequence the Mind must needs be a Body, we inquire what the Nature of that Body is; and so the Ideas of Extension, Figure, and Motion, are continually present to our Mind; and, because they are of themselves inconsistent with the Nature of the Mind, from thence come that Darkness and Obscurity by which we are blinded, and persuaded that the Nature of the Mind cannot be known.

One cannot perceive any such Connexion between the Ideas of Perception and Will, and those of Extension, Figure, and Motion, that where-ever the former are, there must the latter be also; nor does one see any Reason why Perception and Will are not as easily believed to exist separately from Extension, Figure, and Motion, as Extension, Figure, and Motion, are to exist separately from Perception and Will; only, because these are actually perceived to exist, and we have not yet been actually conscious of such a separate Existence of the other.

If Thinking and Willing were common to every Being that we knew, we could no more frame an Idea of a pure material Substance existing without these Qualifications, than we can now of a pure thinking Substance, existing without those Qualities, which we attribute to Body.

If it does not follow, that because Matter is of such a Nature, and so modified, therefore it moveth; much less can it be inferred, that because Matter is so and so disposed and moves,

therefore it thinks and wills; for that Idea we have of Motion, does involve Matter in it; but I can form a Notion of Thought and Will, and be conſcious of ſomething which thinks and wills, without having any Ideas, at the ſame time, of Solidity, Extenſion, Figure, and Motion: So that it is as demonſtrable, that the Soul is not any Mode, Compoſition, and Reſult of the Qualities which we aſcribe to Body, as it is, that any Idea we have in our Minds is not any other.

All the Thoughts, Notions, and Ideas, we have in our Minds, whatever their Objects be, whether corporeal, or incorporeal Things, are all immaterial; and therefore the Soul, which is the Subject of them, muſt be immaterial alſo.

In the ſame Manner that we know what Matter is, we know what a Spirit is, not what the pure naked Subſtance of a Spirit is, but what its Virtues, Powers, Operations, and Qualities, which are ſo eſſentially different from thoſe of Matter, that we have Reaſon to make an eſſential Difference between their Subſtances alſo.

From the human Soul's Power of aſcending above material Objects and Repreſentations, and its framing ſome, tho' imperfect Conceptions of Things immaterial, as of God, Angels, and the ſeparate Souls of Men; from, likewiſe, its abſtracted ſpiritual Compariſons of Things, compounding, dividing them, judging of their Relations, mutual Reſpects, Agreements, or Diſagreements; from, moreover, the Soul's metaphyſical Notions, wholly ſeparated from Matter, of Univerſals, *entia rationis*, and the like; from its vaſt extenſive Comprehenſion, unlimited by any Thing of this viſible, material Creation; from the Capacity of our Underſtandings, to comprehend ſo many, ſo different, nay, contrary Things

as they do, and yet to keep the Conceptions of them distinct and unmingled; from the Ability that our Souls have to remember past Things at never so great Distance of Time, to connect and compare them with the present Occurrences, and thence to frame Conjectures of the Future, which Conjectures are sometimes so certain, that they seem almost Prophecies; from our Soul's quick Vivacity and Acuteness in finding out so many excellent Arts, and industrious Mysteries, in polishing, improving, and piercing deep into so many occult Sciences, and difficult intricate Matters; from its having a Capacity of guiding and governing the Body, and not being guided and governed by it; from its self-determining Power, by which, when it pleaseth, it can contradict and determine quite counter to all bodily Inclinations and Desires, excited by any material Impressions entering in at the Senses, can wish and chuse opposite to the strongest and most prevalent of them; from all the foregoing Capacities, and natural Endowments of the rational Soul, we must infer it to be a spiritual and incorporeal Substance.

OMNIPOTENCE itself cannot put Powers into a Thing, of which its Nature is incapable; but either he must give it a new Nature, susceptible of these Powers, or else must leave the Subject unendued with them; and this, not because of any Imperfection or Limitation in the Power of God, but by reason of the Incapacity of the Subject: So that the Ideas of Matter and Thought, and consequently their Natures, being absolutely incompatible, it cannot be supposed, that the Powers of Cogitation, Volition, Sensation, are put into human Matter or Body by God.

Since the Soul is not determined in its Motions by the different Preſſures of material Things, as all other Matter is, but hath Power to ſwim againſt the Torrent, and move quite counter to all foreign Impreſſions; it hence neceſſarily follows, that it is immaterial, as it does alſo from its Operations, exceeding ſo much the utmoſt Power of dull and paſſive Matter.

I perceive, I know that my Will hath no other Cauſe but itſelf; I will, becauſe I will; my Will then, my Mind, is the true Principle of its Actions; it knows itſelf, reflects upon itſelf, and its Operations; all that does not belong to a Body.

The Liberty of the Will does not only conſiſt in ſome Sort of Aſſent it can give to our Motions, but in that it hath the Power to alter them, to ſuppreſs and Stop them, and to renew them again every Moment as it pleaſeth, which a Body cannot do.

Tho' the Soul is the Seat, Spring, and firſt Riſe of Liberty, it ſtands however in need of a Body ready and well-diſpoſed to obey all its Commands, for the due exerciſe of all its Functions; as one who plays upon the Lute, wants a Lute with all its Strings bent and tuned, that he may play upon it with Exactneſs and Harmony.

A Man writes with his Pen, and cannot write without one; is it therefore his Pen properly that writes, and not the Man? The Body is the Inſtrument of the Soul in its Operations here, and as the Inſtrument is fit or unfit, ſo muſt its Operations be more or leſs perfect.

The Mind by its own Virtue, and Power of thinking, compares the Non-entity with the Being, to find out that theſe two Ideas of Being

and Non-entity do mutually deſtroy one another.

Since the human Mind reaſons upon what is not in Being, as upon what is, it follows that it acts and thinks without the Aſſiſtance of any Object.

What is there in the mere Notion of the Relation of one Thing to another, as of a Father to a Son, to imprint its Image there, which is an immaterial Idea? for the Notion of Relation, is neither in the Father, nor the Son, conceived as material Subſtances, but is ſomething immaterial conceived to be betwixt them both; a mere metaphyſical Conſideration, that hath no material Exiſtence, but a ſpiritual one only in the Conceptions of the Soul; which purely ſpiritual Conceptions prove the Soul in Man to be a Spirit, of a ſpecifickly diſtinct Subſtance from Matter and Body.

We have but one Senſation, one Notion or Idea of whatever we ſee, hear, or feel, or underſtand; and therefore it is ſome one indiviſible Thing in us which perceiveth the Whole.

Who could have taught Men firſt, that the Sun is greater than it appears to our Sight? We muſt needs, to that End, acknowledge in Man a reaſoning Principle, diſtinguiſh'd from all the Motions of thoſe Corpuſcles, which produce Senſations and Imagination.

All thoſe Texts of Scripture which prove a ſeparate Exiſtence or Survival of the deceaſed Soul apart from the Body, prove likewiſe its being a Subſtance eſſentially diſtinct from, and independent on the Body.

If the human Soul be a ſpiritual Subſtance or Being, as her ſpiritual Actions of Reaſon, Thought, Memory, Self-motion, Self-reflection, free Choice or Refuſal, Approbation or Condemnation of Con-

ſcience, Ability of abſtracting from material Objects in her Cogitations, and of forming Conceptions of ſpiritual Beings and Properties, infer her to be; and if, upon this her Spirituality, ſhe be naturally indiſſolvible, incorruptible, a Subſtance diſtinct from, and independent on the Body, as ſhe evidently is, then may ſhe live, move, and act without the Body.

In this World we find that the Soul does not make uſe of the Body, as an Inſtrument to promote Thought; on the contrary, when ſhe propoſeth to think ſeriouſly, and to any Purpoſe, ſhe abſtracts herſelf from the Body, and all Things belonging to it, as far as poſſible, ſo as not to regard or mind any Thing without herſelf; and why then ſhould ſhe not be able, after her Separation from the Body, to think and perform thoſe Functions which are peculiar to her Nature?

It ſeems ſtrange to you, that the Soul ſhould ſurvive the Ruins of Matter; but you ought rather to wonder at its being ty'd to a Subject that differs ſo much from its excellent Nature; we ought to admire the Union of the Soul with the Body, and not its Separation from it; apprehend, if you can, that Alliance of a Thing extended, which taketh up a Room, which is limited within certain Bounds, which acts only upon what is preſent, upon other Subjects, and upon what is near to it, with a Thing which has neither Figure, nor Extenſion, nor Colour, nor Fluidity, nor Solidity, which in ſome reſpect is everywhere, without any Parts to fill any Space, which acts upon the Time paſt and future, upon itſelf, and upon its Way of acting.

Should the Soul ſo earneſtly deſire, that the Poſſeſſion of what can make her happy ſhould be eternal, and would ſhe be ſo much frighted when ſhe perceives the End of her Happineſs, if ſhe did

not find herſelf capable of an endleſs Felicity, or of an eternal Miſery, and by Conſequence did think herſelf immortal?

If Man was deſigned by God for Happineſs, and is ſo framed, that he cannot enjoy complete Happineſs in this Life, without a Mixture of Uneaſineſs; and yet has Capacities and Deſires of greater than he can conceive, belonging to his Nature in the neceſſary Circumſtances of it here; and farther, if Mankind be now involved in ſuch a State and Condition of Life, in which they all actually enjoy much leſs Happineſs, than they find themſelves by Nature capable of here, and the greateſt Part of them have a larger Share of the Trouble than the Advantages of Life; from hence, I think it may be truly and properly inferred, that there will be another State of pure complete Happineſs, anſwerable at leaſt to the higheſt Notions and Conceptions, which we are able to frame of it.

There is much leſs Evidence required to induce a wiſe Man to believe another Life, and to govern his Life by this Perſuaſion, than what can reaſonably ſatisfy a wiſe Man, that there is no other Life after this.

Thoſe who undertake to demonſtrate, that the Soul is mortal, muſt demonſtrate not only againſt the Nature of the Soul, but againſt the Will and the Power of God, (if they own any ſuch Being) that God neither can nor will preſerve human Souls immortal.

The Immortality of the Soul is implied in that Expreſſion which is often uſed in the Books of *Moſes*, that Men, when they died, were gathered to their People, which muſt be underſtood of their Souls, their Bodies being buried at different Places, and different Countries, *Balaam* wiſhed to die the Death of the Righteous, and

that his laſt End might be like that of the Righteous, for what Reaſon? but that he might not be miſerable, but happy after Death.

The Law given by *Moſes*, did ſuppoſe the Immortality of the Souls of Men, and the Expectation of another Life after this, as Principles of Religion in ſome Degree naturally known; but made no new and expreſs Revelation of theſe Things, it being a political Law not intended for the Government of Mankind, but of one particular Nation.

In ſeveral Places of the Old Teſtament, the Rewards of Heaven are declared, *Pſal.* xvi. 11. xvii. 15. *Prov.* xv. 24. *Eccleſ.* xii. 14. *Dan.* xii. 2. and the Torments of Hell aſſerted, *Pſal.* xvi. 10. *Eccleſ.* xi. 9. xii. 14. *Iſa.* xxxiii. 14. *Dan.* xii. 2.

It is a big Word for God to declare himſelf to be any one's God; the leaſt we can imagine to be meant by it, is, that God will, in an extraordinary Manner, employ his Power and Wiſdom to do him Good, and concern himſelf more for the Happineſs of thoſe whoſe God he declares himſelf to be, than for others: So, when God declares himſelf the God of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, it ſignifieth, that God intended ſome very peculiar Bleſſing and Advantage to them above others, which ſeeing they did not enjoy in this World, it is very reaſonable to believe, that one Time or other this gracious Declaration and Promiſe of God was made good to them; theſe good Men had no ſuch Bleſſings, but what were common with them to many others that were wicked; and the Bleſſings which God beſtowed upon them, had great Abatements by the Intermixture of many and ſore Afflictions; if ſo, then the general Importance of this Promiſe, that God will be the God of good Men, muſt neceſſarily ſignify ſomething beyond this World; for it muſt

contain

contain in it this general Truth, that God will ſometime or other plentifully reward every good Man, and do ſomething far better for him, than for any wicked Man; but if there be no Life after this, it is impoſſible to reconcile this Senſe of it, with the Courſe of God's Providence, and with the Hiſtory of the Bible.

ABEL ſacrificed in Faith, and died in Faith; his very Death was precious to God; and a Faith which God owns and approves in this World without any Reward, cannot fail of a Reward in the next.

IF there were no Life but this, it would be moſt reaſonable to make the beſt we can of it, and to ſpend it in preſent Enjoyments, not in Faith and Hope; and therefore all great and eminent Acts of Faith in God, whatever the particular Inſtances of it be, are a certain Proof, that ſuch Men do believe unſeen Things.

THESE Words of *Jacob*, *Few and evil have been my Days*, would have been an eternal Reproach to God's Promiſes and Providence over good Men, had *Jacob*'s Reward in this World been all that he was to expect for his Obedience therein; there remains therefore a Reſt and Recompence to the People of God in the other World, which the *Jews* could not but expect, their Patriarchs having all died in the Faith, and perſuaded of the Promiſe of another Life; beſides it was evident to them, that there was an After-exiſtence, from the ſignal Inſtances and Examples of ſome among them, who were immediately tranſlated out of this World into the other, without their ſeeing of Death; ſuch were the Prophets *Enoch* and *Elias*; as alſo from the more numerous Inſtances of others, who were recalled to Life again, after being dead.

HAD

HAD God intended no more in his Promiſes to *Iſrael*, but a temporal *Canaan*, he uſed them much worſe than he did the reſt of Mankind; all the Privilege they had by being God's peculiar People, was to live under ſeverer Laws, and to be more ſeverely puniſhed for their Sins.

AFTER God had given the *Iſraelites* the Land of *Canaan*, good Men ſtill owned themſelves to be Pilgrims and Strangers upon Earth.

THE Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, and his Aſcending into Heaven, is a clearer Demonſtration of another Life after this, and more level to the Capacities of all Mankind, than the fineſt and ſubtileſt Arguments that can be drawn from the immaterial Nature of the Soul, its Power of Reflection upon itſelf, and Independency upon the Body as to ſome of its Operations, which yet are ſome of the chiefeſt Arguments that Philoſophy affords to prove the Immortality of our Souls.

IS it not a ſtrange Thing, that they which would imprint (according to our Scepticks) ſuch vain and groundleſs Fears in the Minds of Men, as of future Retributions, ſuitable to our good or bad Actions in this Life, ſhould have ſucceeded ſo happily and univerſally therein, notwithſtanding all the natural Averſions in us to ſuch Dreads of Mind; and that they who would deliver us from ſuch tormenting Anticipations of Opinion, could never effect this their Purpoſe, altho' they had the Deſires of the Wicked on their Side?

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Concerning the Worth of Man's Soul.

IF we conſider the Dignity of an intelligent Being, and put that in the Scales againſt brute inanimate Matter, we may affirm, without over-valuing human Nature, that the Soul of one virtuous and religious Man is of greater Worth and Excellency, than the Sun, and his Planets, and all the Stars in the World.

WISE Agents never lay great Projects for the ſake of little Trifles, and unleſs God had a mighty Value for the Souls of Men, his making ſuch vaſt Preparations as he has made to ſave them, would be like that fooliſh Emperor's raiſing a numerous Army, only to go and gather Cockle-ſhells. Can we think thoſe Souls of little Worth, which the Son of God thought worth his Dying for? And what greater Diſgrace and Affront can we put upon God, than that thoſe Souls of ours, which Chriſt thought worthy every Drop of his Blood, we ſhould not think worth any Part of our Care?

FROM the unwearied Diligence of malignant Spirits to ſeduce and ruin us, we may moſt certainly conclude, either that they are very fooliſh Devils, or that our Souls are very precious Beings.

'TIS not merely being deprived of ſome Good, which makes our Want, but being deprived of ſome Good which ſeemed due to us: *Cyrus* being a Shepherd, did not think himſelf miſerable for not

not ſitting upon the Throne; but *Cyrus* knowing himſelf to be of the Royal Blood, cannot be ſatisfied without a Crown; what is Man then, who finds himſelf always poor and miſerable, what Degree of Proſperity ſoever he may attain to? He muſt needs be a Being, whoſe Excellency is diſproportionable to all that we ſee; ſo the Senſe of our Want is one of the greateſt Characters of our Greatneſs.

God is more the Life of the Soul, than the Soul is the Life of the Body; the Body liveth, becauſe the Soul is united to it; but how is it united to it? All that we know is, that Pleaſure and Pain bind them together; 'tis chiefly by that Love the Soul hath for its Body, we know its intimate Union with it; ſhe is affected with Joy, when it is well-diſpoſed: By the ſame Things we know, that God is the Life of our Soul; for what ſhews evidently, that the Soul ought to be united to God to live, that is, to be in a natural State without any Pain, is, that it is uneaſy when far from God; we can do nothing contrary to his Will without ſome Remorſe; when we ſubmit ourſelves to him, when we cleave and are united to him, we enjoy a ſecret Pleaſure.

Would to God we would at laſt make but a juſt Eſtimate of ourſelves, and thereupon reſolve, as it is moſt reaſonable we ſhould, never to comply with any ſinful Motion, till we can get more by it than our Souls are worth; and then to be ſure we ſhould be for ever deaf to all the Proffers which the Devil or World can make us.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

Concerning DEATH.

HE that looks upon Death only as a Paſſage to Glory, may welcome the Meſſengers of it, as bringing him the beſt and moſt joyful News that ever came to him in his whole Life; and no Man can ſtay behind in this World, with half the Comfort this Man leaves it.

DEATH is not ſo dreadful in itſelf, as with regard to the dreadful Conſequences of it; and thoſe will be as we are, comfortable and happy to the Good, but diſmal and miſerable to the Wicked.

WHEN we die, we do not ceaſe to be, nor ceaſe to live, but only ceaſe to live in theſe earthly Bodies.

WHEN we are dead to this World, the Fears of dying or leaving this World are over.

THE only Way to arm ourſelves againſt the natural Fears of dying, is to confirm ourſelves in this Belief, that Death doth not put an End to us; that our Souls ſhall ſurvive in a State of Bliſs and Happineſs, when our Bodies ſhall rot in their Graves and that theſe mortal Bodies themſelves; ſhall, at the Sound of the laſt Trump, riſe again out of the Duſt, Immortal and Glorious.

WERE Men thoroughly convinced, that when they die, Death will tranſlate them to a more happy Life, it would be as eaſy a Thing to put off theſe Bodies, as to change their Cloaths, or

to

to leave an old and ruinous Houſe, for a more beautiful and convenient Habitation.

THE Death of a Saint is a new Birth, the Pains of the dying Body are as Throws, whereby the ripened Soul is delivered in the Land of the Living: The very Agonies of Death are ſo many profitable Pangs of Nature then in Travail, by which the Children of the Reſurrection are brought to the Birth, and born they are to a Life of Bliſs, ſo much more exquiſite, in Proportion as their Pains have been ſharper; where every pointed Affliction, that made up their Crown of Thorn, becomes an additional Ray of Light, and helps to compoſe a brighter and more maſſive Crown of Glory.

THO' Virtue will ſweeten Labours and Difficulties, yet no Man would chuſe always to be in a State of War. Eaſe and Reſt is very pleaſant and refreſhing after Labour; this makes the Grave in ſome Degree acceptable after the Toils and Labours of Virtue, that *there the Weary are at Reſt.*

OUGHT we to repine, that our Bodies are a little while reduced to their primitive Duſt, when this is only the caſting of Seed into the Ground, certain to ſprout again in freſh Luſtre, and great Plenty, at the general Harveſt?

DEATH opens our Eyes, inlargeth our Proſpect, preſents us with a new and more glorious World, which we can never ſee while we are ſhut up in Fleſh; which ſhould make us as willing to part with this Veil, as to take the Film off our Eyes, which hinders our Sight.

THIS Life is long enough for a Race, for a Warfare, for a Pilgrimage; and when we are in any meaſure prepared for Heaven, and poſſeſſed with great and paſſionate Deſires of it, we ſhall think

think it a great deal too long to be kept out of it.

If Sinners were reaſonable, nothing would endear them more to this Life, than that it may afford them the Means of Converſion; and, far from blaming them for their Fear of Death, they are rather to be blamed for not fearing it enough.

There are ſo many Sluices and Flood-gates to let Death in, and Life out, that it is next to a Miracle, (tho' we take but little Notice of it) that every one of us did not die every Day ſince we were born.

An early Preparation for Death is the very beſt Means to make our Lives happy in this World: For, *1ſt*, It delivers us from the Fears of Death, and conſequently from moſt other Fears. *2dly*, It ſupports us under all the Troubles and Calamities of this Life.

The Time of dying is ſo uncertain, the Ways of dying ſo infinite, ſo unſeen, ſo caſual and fortuitous to us, that inſtead of promiſing ourſelves long Life, no wiſe Man will promiſe himſelf a Week, nor venture any thing of great Moment and Conſequence upon it; the Hope of long Life is nothing elſe but Self-flattery.

To expect Death every Day, is like expecting Thieves every Night, which does not diſturb our Reſt, but only makes us lock and bar our Doors, and provide for our own Defence: Thus to expect Death, is not to live under the perpetual Fears of dying, but to live as a wiſe Man would do, who knows not that he muſt, but that he may die to Day.

The Uncertainty of our Lives is a great Motive to conſtant Watchfulneſs, to an early and perſevering Piety; but to know when we

ſhall

ſhall die, could ſerve no good End, but would increaſe the Wickedneſs of Mankind.

We can die but once, and if we miſcarry that once, we are undone for ever.

Some Men talk of preparing for Death, as if it were a thing that could be done in two or three Days, and that the proper Time of doing it were a little before they die. But I know no other Preparation for Death, but living well; and thus we muſt every Day prepare for Death, and then we ſhall be well prepared, when Death cometh.

There are none leſs diſturbed with the Terrors of Death, than the eminently Good, or the extremely Bad.

Evils affect us according to their apprehended Nearneſs: A petty Conſtable, that is troubleſome and vexatious, is more feared by his Neighbour, than the *Grand Signior* with all his Executioners: As remote Objects, tho' of vaſt Bigneſs, are leſſened to our Sight; ſo, through the ſuppoſed Interval of many Years, Death is looked on with a Diminution of its Terrors.

Here we are advancing, but by Death we arrive at Perfection.

How long ſoever the Interval be from Death to the Reſurrection, it ſhall be with them that ſleep in Jeſus, as 'tis with thoſe that awake out of a quiet, natural Sleep, to whom the longeſt Night ſeems but a Moment.

It appears by the Scripture Account of it, that the Period of our Lives is not ſo peremptorily determined by God, but that we may lengthen and ſhorten them, live longer, or die ſooner, according as we behave ourſelves in this World, as appears by *Pſalm* xci. 15. *Prov.* iii. 16. *Prov.* x. 27. *Deut.* iv. 40. 1 *Kings* iii. 14. *Pſalm* cii. 24. *Pſalm* lv. 23.

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How can any Man be said not to live out half his Days, if he lives as long as God hath decreed he shall live? For if the Period of every particular Man's Life be determined by God, none are his Days but what God hath decreed for him: But when God threatens, that the Wicked shall not live out half their Days, that is half that Time which is allotted for Men to live on Earth; for they have no other Interest in these Days, but that they are the Days of a Man, and therefore might be their Days too.

Death, as it signifieth a Separation of Soul and Body, and the Death of both, is a Curse, and a Punishment; but not as it signifieth leaving this World, and living in the next.

God had promised Paradise, and the Tree of Life, to no Man, but to *Adam* himself, whom he created and placed in Paradise; and therefore he took nothing away from any Man but from *Adam*, when he thrust him out of Paradise. Children indeed must follow the Condition of their Parents: Had *Adam* preserved his Right to the Tree of Life, we had enjoyed it too; but he forfeiting it, we lost it in him, and in him die: We lost, I say, not any thing we had a Right to, but such a supernatural Privilege as we might have had, had he preserved his Innocence. God has done us no Injury, we are by Nature mortal Creatures, and he leaves us in that mortal State; and to withdraw Favours upon a reasonable Provocation, is neither hard nor unjust.

Death is not to be looked upon as properly a Punishment inflicted on *Adam*'s Posterity; for 'tis impossible that the Innocent should be punished for another's Offence; but it is only a natural Necessity of dying, derived from *Adam*, on whom it was inflicted as a Punishment.

THAT Death, which is the Wages of Sin, is not a natural, but eternal Death, which cannot affect Children, but only thoſe who have been guilty of a voluntary Tranſgreſſion of the Commands of God.

CHRIST hath abſolutely redeemed us from Death, as that ſignifieth the Separation of Soul and Body; for both good and bad Men ſhall riſe again; but he hath not thus abſolutely and unconditionally redeemed us from thoſe other Puniſhments which our Sins deſerve.

IT is not merely the Law which threatens Death, that continues Men in the State and Dominion of Death, but want of Power to raiſe themſelves, which makes the Threatening of Death without a Deliverer and Saviour, equivalent to eternal Death.

WE have no Reaſon to complain, that the Sin of *Adam* is imputed to us to Death, if the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt purchaſe for us eternal Life: The firſt was a neceſſary Conſequence of *Adam*'s loſing Paradiſe; the ſecond is wholly owing to the Grace of God.

CHAP. XXX.

Concerning the RESURRECTION.

IS it more difficult to raiſe a Body when 'tis dead, than to create a Body out of nothing? No, ſurely; the ſame Power that could effect the one, can likewiſe do the other.

MIGHT we not as well diſpute, that it is impoſſible for a Man to be born, as that it is impoſſibl

poſſible for him to be raiſed from the Dead, if our own Experience did not convince us of that, but not of this? God, who gave all that Power and Ability, which natural Cauſes have to produce their Effects, may, if he pleaſeth, produce the ſame Effects immediately by himſelf; for it is not becauſe he ſtands in Need of any Help from natural Cauſes, that he has appointed them, but becauſe it ſeemed beſt to his infinite Wiſdom.

Will we preſume to ſay, that God can do nothing but what we underſtand how it may be done, when every thing we ſee may inform us that his Wiſdom is infinite, and his Ways paſt finding out? Indeed, if we underſtand every thing elſe, there might be ſome Pretence to ſcruple the Reſurrection, becauſe we do not underſtand how it ſhall be.

In that Expreſſion, that *David* and others ſlept with their Fathers, is implied, not only the Immortality of the Soul, but the Reſurrection of the Body.

By Life and Immortality, is generally underſtood no more than a future State; that the Souls of good Men live, and receive the Rewards of Virtue, after Death; and in this Senſe it is very hard to ſay, that Life and Immortality is brought to Light by the Goſpel, ſince the Generality of Mankind, whatever the Reaſons of this Belief were, did believe it from the Beginning of the World: But this is not the Goſpel Notion of Life and Immortality, which does not merely ſignify the Life of ſeparate Souls, but the Reſurrection of the Dead into immortal Life, to live for ever in immortal and incorruptible Bodies. This immortal Life was never brought to Light, was never made viſible till the Appearance of Chriſt; the heathen World knew nothing of it,

and the *Jews* had but very imperfect Conjectures about it; but now we see the Resurrection of the Dead, and immortal Life, in the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead.

As human Nature was lost and undone in *Adam*, was corrupted and became mortal, by the Corruption and Mortality of human Nature in his Person, which brought all Mankind under the Sentence of Death; so the Mystery of our Redemption is the Redemption of human Nature from Sin and Death in the Person of Christ, which entitles all who belong to him, descend from him, and are engrafted into his Body by a new and spiritual Birth, to a blessed Immortality, as our natural Descent from *Adam* condemns us to Death and Corruption.

Tho' the Souls of good Men are certainly in a State of Happiness, when separated from their Bodies, yet this is no-where in Scripture called immortal Life; they are in a State of Death still, for Death is the Separation of Soul and Body; but our Immortality commenceth with our Resurrection, and it is abolishing Death which brings Life and Immortality to Light: This Christ hath done, and this the Saviour of Mankind must do, if he will be a complete Saviour.

CHAP. XXXI.

Concerning the Last Judgment.

What imaginable Reason is there to question whether God will judge Mankind, when he hath made Man just such a Creature

ture as he must have made him, if he had intended to judge him, endowed him with Reason, and Understanding, and Liberty of Choice, given him Laws and Rules of Action, and made him in Subjection to himself, obnoxious to his own Power and Justice.

When we cannot give a reasonable Account of our Actions, a Child and Beggar shall shame and confound us, whatever our Quality or Character be; and it would seem strange, if Reason would make us accountable to all the World, except only to God, who is the sovereign Lord of all.

God is the Author of Pleasure and Pain; he is the Disposer of them; he steadily pursues his Laws; he rewards the Good, and punisheth the Evil; what then can we infer from thence, but that, when he does not reward the Good in this Life, nor punisheth the Evil that is committed in it, he puts it off to another Time, in which he is to make that just Distribution of Pleasure and Pain?

The Reasons of most of the Evangelical Commands must be fetched wholly from the other World, and a future Judgment; and therefore we should have had the same Evidence for a Judgment to come, that we have for the Christian Religion, tho' there had been no such express Mention made of a future Judgment.

God hath been greatly dishonoured in the World; some have denied his Being and Providence; others have set up rival and opposite Gods, and given his Worship to Devils, to dead Men, to Wood and Stone, nay, to the vilest and most contemptible Creatures; others have framed very unworthy Notions of God, and cloathed him with their own Weaknesses and Passions, made him either a Tyrant and a Devil, or such a tame, easy, fond Being, as Men may

make bold with, without Danger; others prophane his Name, corrupt his Worſhip, or neglect and deſpiſe it; ſome think themſelves too big to ſerve God, others too little to be obſerved by him; ſome ridicule his Laws, others take no Notice of them: And when God has been ſo much diſhonoured in the World, he ſhould vindicate his own Glory, make it publick and viſible, and force all his Creatures to own and confeſs it; which is a Reaſon why he ſhould not judge Men ſingly, but appoint a general Day of Judgment.

At the Day of Judgment no Man ſhall be condemned for ſuch Sins as he hath heartily repented of and reformed; and this is to be judged by Grace, as well as by our Works; for the Law preſcribes our Duty, but promiſeth no Pardon, no, not to Penitents; this is owing to the Grace of God, through the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt.

The Obedience of the beſt Men is very defective, ſtained and ſullied, and too often interrupted with wilful and ſcandalous Sins, ſuch as nothing but Grace can pardon; and therefore, much more, nothing but Grace can reward; and therefore good Men are judged by Grace, and rewarded by Grace, tho' according to their Works.

We may be certain our Saviour will condemn none, whom, according to the moſt favourable Conſtruction of the Terms of the Goſpel, he can ſave.

The final Reſolution of a Man's Trial will be this; either he hath performed the gracious Conditions of the Goſpel, and he ſhall be ſaved; or rejected them, and he ſhall be damned. The Impenitent ſhall not be condemned for want of that ſingular, powerful Grace, that was the Privilege

Privilege of the Elect, but for receiving in vain that Meaſure of common Grace that they had.

If we believe that we ſhall be judged, nothing can be more neceſſary, nor more becoming, than to make this the conſtant Rule of our Actions, never to do any thing for which we know God will condemn us, nothing but what we can account for.

It would be of great Uſe to us, ſometimes to remove the Scene from this World to the Day of Judgment, when all Mankind ſhall appear together, the greateſt Appearance that ever was; and therefore it is much more conſiderable how we ſhall appear then, than how we appear in this World.

When a true Zeal and Concernment for the Faith and Practice of Chriſtianity fails in the Church, and Atheiſm, and Infidelity, and all Manner of Wickedneſs prevails in the World, theſe are Preſages of a near Approach of a final Judgment.

God being inviſible in his own Nature, hath moſt wiſely ordained the laſt Judgment of the World to be tranſacted by a viſible Perſon.

The Saviour of Sinners muſt be their Judge, becauſe we are not actually ſaved, till we are finally judged.

Who but he, who, we believe, ſhall come to be our Judge, could have repreſented the Pomp and Proceedings of the Day of Judgment, the End of this, and the Condition of good and bad Men in the next World? Which we have all imaginable Reaſon to conclude ſhall be, from the manifold Experience of the reſt having already been preciſely, according to what he declared of them ſo long before.

The Day of Judgment is deſcribed with ſo much Solemnity, and ſo many Particulars, that

it may seem impossible for them all to be dispatched in the Compass not only of one, but of many Days; but the *Jews*, from whom our Saviour and his Apostles took the Expression of the Day of Judgment, understood by it a Time of many Years Continuance, and sometimes the Term even of a Thousand Years; and by Day, in the Language of the Scriptures, is to be understood Season, or any Period or Distinction of Time, with respect to some particular Thing or Occasion.

CHAP. XXXII.

Concerning HEAVEN, *and* ETERNAL SALVATION.

HE that enjoys God, enjoys all: As a rich Man gives himself by the Communication of his Riches; a learned Man by the Communication of his Learning; the Sun by the Communication of its Light; so God imparts himself by the Communication of his Light, of his Immortality, Happiness, Glory, &c.

IF God hath ordained some Pleasures, that the Soul might be delighted in her Union with the Body; what Delights hath he not prepared for those who are to enjoy him?

THERE is much less Difficulty to conceive how God will make us relish infinite Pleasures in the Enjoyment of him, than to apprehend how, in our present State, the Bodies occasion in us pleasant Sensations: Since there being no natural Relation between those Sensations, and the Actions of Bodies upon that which our Soul

Soul is united to, there is no other Way to ſolve that Difficulty, but by having Recourſe to God, in whoſe Power it hath been to join, as he thought fit, to the Motions of Bodies, Senſations pleaſing to the Soul; as Men join to Sounds, of themſelves inſignificant, thoſe Ideas which they have a Mind to repreſent.

Who can make any Doubt, but that all the Pleaſures are to be found in God, and that whatſoever is divided among the different Beings in the World, which have any particular Charm, meets together in him alone? Can we imagine, that Honey ſhould be ſweet and pleaſing, and that he who hath made it, ſhould not be much more ſo?

If the Sight of the Creature only is ſo charming, what Pleaſure does not ariſe from the Sight of the Creator? If the Diſcovery of a ſmall Secret, of a Cauſe ſomewhat hidden, as for Inſtance, of what produceth the Rainbow with its different Colours, is ſo pleaſing; how great is the Joy of a Mind, who knowing the firſt Cauſe, knows in it all others, and therefore is not ignorant of any Thing?

By the Union of the Soul with God, nothing elſe is to be underſtood, but that we ſhall be happy, when, God, who is the firſt Truth, diſcovering himſelf to us, we will know and love him perfectly, and therefore will be united to him by the Faculties of our Souls, and will enjoy him in the ſame Manner that a Friend is enjoyed.

Our Nature being ſuch, that the very Appearance of Good allures us; is it poſſible, that a Soul ſeeing God ſhould not love him infinitely, and that that Love alone ſhould not make her infinitely happy?

After a full Draught of any ſenſual Pleaſure, we preſently loath it, and hate it as much after

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the Enjoyment, as we courted it, and longed for it, in the Expectation; but in the Felicities of Heaven, theſe two Things ſhall be reconciled, which never met in any ſenſual Delight, long and full Enjoyment, and yet a freſh and perpetual Pleaſure; as in God's Preſence there is Fulneſs of Joy, ſo at his right Hand there ſhall be Pleaſures for evermore.

It is certain, there are Degrees of Happineſs among the Bleſſed; and it is very probable, that ſince the Happineſs of Angels and good Men is but finite, thoſe who are moſt happy, do continually receive new Additions to their Bleſſedneſs.

The Obedience of adult Perſons, performed by the moſt difficult Acts of Piety, will be crowned with a greater Degree of Glory, than the Innocence of Infants; eſpecially thoſe who die before the Uſe of their Reaſon, on whom we are uncertain what Degree of Glory God will beſtow.

The Souls of the Bleſſed above are not wide and capacious enough in their primary Powers and Faculties, juſt at their Entrance on Heaven, to take in at once all the Impartments of Bliſs and Glory which flow from God, the infinite Source and Fountain of Happineſs; but as former Receipts of Knowledge, Love, Admiration, Joy and Bleſſedneſs, have inlarged and dilated the happy Soul's Capacity for the Receipts of more, ſo larger Communications ſtill flow upon the celeſtial Spirit.

Thoſe natural Affections and Paſſions, which are of ſo great Uſe in this World, will be of none in the next; good Men will have no Friends, no Relations in the other World, but thoſe who are truly good, who are Members of the ſame myſtical Body of Chriſt, the Children of God, and Heirs of the ſame Happineſs and Glory.

It seems not at all necessary to understand those Texts, wherein the Holy Scripture refers us to the Resurrection, for the full Accomplishment of our Hopes, and joyful Expectations, and sends us to the Day of Judgment for our inheriting the Kingdom prepared for us before the Foundation of the World, in such a Sense as may exclude good Souls from Heaven till that Time, but only to apprehend them, as importing a more full and complete Recompence of Reward to be conferr'd on the intire Person of Man, both in Soul and Body, at the Resurrection of the Dead.

The Opinion of the Primitive Fathers was, that tho' before Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, all deceased Souls were detain'd in a middle State; yet since his Resurrection and Ascension, they went immediately into Heaven; because they were persuaded, that Christ, thro' his Blood shed, and by his Resurrection and Ascension, opened unto us a Way into the Holy of Holies, into the inmost and highest Region of Heaven, as appears by St. *Jerome*, tom. v. Com. in *Eccles.* chap. ix. pag. 24. St. *Ambrose*, tom. ii. *de Fide ad Gratiam*, lib. iv. cap. i. p. 77, 78. St. *Austin*, tom. v. *de Civit. Dei*, lib. xx. cap. xv. p. 563.

To be happy, is to enjoy what we desire, and to live with those whom we love; but there is nothing in Heaven suitable to the Desires and Appetites of a wicked Man.

Heaven is not so desolate a Place, or so utterly void of Inhabitants, that, like some new-discovered Plantation, it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate Persons, the Scum and Refuse of Mankind: There are an innumerable Company of glorious Angels, Thousands of Thousands standing before God.

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Every Man muſt not expect to have *Saul's* Fortune, who, when he was wearied with ſeeking his Father's Aſſes, met with a Kingdom; we muſt not think, when we are tired with purſuing the Follies and Vanities of this World, to retire into Heaven, and to ſit down in the Kingdom of God.

Certainly the Intereſt of our Souls is not the ſlighteſt Concern we have; the avoiding eternal Miſery, the acquiring endleſs Bliſs, is not ſo trivial or ſo eaſy a Matter, as to be the Work of a Moment, the Purchaſe of ſome few yawning Wiſhes, or volatile Fancies; he who is to diſpoſe the Rewards, hath propoſed us other Conditions, aſſigned us Work, which takes up no leſs Time, than that of our whole Lives.

We muſt have a very mean Opinion of Heaven, and eternal Happineſs, if we think it not worth the Obedience and Service of a few Years, how difficult ſoever that were.

'Tis no hard Condition to ſuffer tranſient Afflictions for the obtaining a happy Immortality, to be conformable to the Image of our ſuffering Redeemer, that we may be crowned with his Glory.

Let us not delude ourſelves with vain Hopes, that the Work of our Salvation may be done at any Time, and in an Inſtant, and that, if we can but faſhion our laſt Breath into, *Lord, have Mercy upon me*; this will prevail with God, and make Atonement for the long Courſe of a wicked and ſinful Life.

It were one of the abſurdeſt Things in the World, to imagine that God ſhould grant to Men Forgiveneſs of Sins, and eternal Life, let them behave themſelves as they will.

Tho' we ſhall be acquitted, and finally abſolved by the Mercies of God, and the Merits of Chriſt; yet

yet not without Holineſs, not without good Works, not without partaking of the divine Nature, and being conformed to Chriſt our Head.

This Life throughout the Scripture is repreſented as the Time of Working, as a Race, a Warfare, a Labouring in the Vineyard; the other World as a Place of Recompence, of Rewards or Puniſhments: And if there be ſuch a Relation between this World and the next, as between Fighting and Conquering, and receiving the Crown; as between a Race, and obtaining a Prize; as between the Work and the Reward; then we muſt fight and conquer, run our Race, and finiſh our Work in this World, if we expect the Rewards of the next.

Most of thoſe who profeſs the Belief of another World after this, yet live as if this was the only Life, or as if the other were not worth the Seeking after, or as if they were ſure of it, as if all the Preparation requiſite for obtaining Life eternal, was to believe, confeſs, and expect it only; not conſidering that our owning a future State, and yet not preparing for it by an holy and pious Converſation, will but aggravate our Guilt, and heighten our Condemnation.

Not only Men do nothing almoſt to ſave themſelves, but do almoſt every Thing to undo themſelves; as much as they are careleſs and ſlothful in the Work of their Salvation, ſo much Earneſtneſs and Induſtry do they ſhew for their Ruin.

For a Sinner who is frighted at his Sins, there are Thouſands undone by their Security.

Eternal Salvation cannot be obtained but by Swimming againſt the Torrent of this World; then we muſt not only ſtrive, but continually ſtrive; for if we happen to ſuſpend or leſſen in the leaſt our Strivings, the Stream muſt needs carry

carry us away with it, and that little Time of our Negligence muſt put us back, and drive us away conſiderably from our intended Scope.

No body is undone by deſigning to be ſo; 'tis by not having a ſtrong Mind enough to be ſaved. What can be imagined more unreaſonable than that Negligence? Reaſon allows us to neglect Things that are neither of any great Concern nor difficult; but it requires, that we ſhould uſe all our Endeavours, when, on the one hand, the Thing deſerves it, and on the other, it is impoſſible to ſucceed in it without working with all our Might; therefore, there being nothing of greater Concern than our Salvation, and nothing which requires more Care and Attention than that great Work, 'tis evident, that in nothing our Negligence can be leſs borne with.

What is like to be the Caſe of our poor Souls, when their Adverſaries beſtow ſo much Care and Diligence to deſtroy them, and we will afford none to preſerve them? Surely the ſame as of a beſieged Town, where no Watch or Guard is kept, which is certain to fall a Prey to the Enemy.

God may very well be ſaid not to be willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance, when he does on his Part what is ſufficient to that End; and upon this Ground, the Scripture every-where repreſents God as deſiring the Repentance of Sinners, and their Obedience to his Laws.

All the Solicitations, and importunate Calls of God, are look'd upon as Artifices and Deſigns, as if he had ſome Ends of his own to ſerve upon us; we treat with him, as if he were the Perſon to be advantaged, and barter for Heaven with ſuch an Indifference, as if it would want us more than we it; never conſidering that 'tis impoſſible for

for him to have any other Concern, than that which his Compassion to us creates.

Whereas 'tis God alone who is graciously pleased to decree and bestow upon us eternal Salvation; it belongs to him only to prescribe to us such Laws, and to direct us in such a Way as may bring us to it; the Laws therefore of Salvation and Damnation must be sought after in the Scriptures, that clear and perfect Rule that comprehends whatsoever is necessary for us to know, believe, hope for, and practise, in order to the obtaining of everlasting Life; to this certain, clear, and infallible Rule, must we bring all Doctrines, and try the Weight and Importance of them by this Standard. Since then the Scripture requires two Things necessary to Salvation, *viz.* Faith in God and Jesus Christ, and Obedience or Holiness of Life, grounded upon the Expectation of the divine Promises, it is plain that these Things are necessary: *1st*, Such as the Scripture requires as essential to Faith, and are clearly delivered therein, with a Note of Necessity added thereto; *viz.* That *whosoever believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*, with several other Expressions of the like Nature to be met with in the New Testament; under these Things evidently expressed in Scripture, are comprehended those which are so necessarily annexed to them, that they may be deduced from them by a necessary Connection, and which have been believed by all Christians at all Times, and in all Places, the Summary of which is contained in that which is vulgarly called the Apostles Creed. *2dly*, Those Things are necessary, without which the Practice of Piety, and the Hopes of eternal Life, cannot subsist; for since without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord, and Godliness has the Promise both of this Life,

and

and of that which is to come, all thoſe Things ought to be eſteemed as neceſſary, by which Godlineſs and Hopes of eternal Life are ſo far ſupported, as that they cannot ſubſiſt without them; of which, among others, is the Doctrine concerning the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.

Tho' all Things neceſſary to be believed are clearly contained in Scripture, yet every Thing clearly expreſſed therein is not neceſſary to be believed, unleſs God is pleaſed to annex Salvation to the Belief and Obſervation thereof; a Man may, for Inſtance, be ignorant of ſome hiſtorical Matters of Fact related in Scripture, without any Hazard of his eternal Salvation.

Whatsoever is not abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, does not immediately become indifferent: As no Man will call thoſe Things indifferent which are repugnant to his Health, tho' they are not mortal; ſo neither will any one call thoſe Errors indifferent, which render the attaining Salvation more difficult, tho' they do not abſolutely cut off all Hopes of it.

If Chriſt came into the World to ſave Sinners, and there is no other Name under Heaven, whereby Sinners can be ſaved, thoſe who will not believe on his Name, muſt eternally periſh, as if there were but one Phyſician in the World who could cure ſuch a mortal Diſtemper, thoſe who labour under this Diſtemper, and will not go to this Phyſician for their Cure, muſt neceſſarily die by their Neglect; their Infidelity in that Caſe would kill them, (what Reaſons ſoever they could pretend for their Infidelity) by neglecting the only Means of their Recovery.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Concerning HELL, *and the Eternity of its Torments.*

AS the Glory of Heaven cannot be fully underſtood till enjoyed, ſo the Torments of Hell cannot be comprehended till felt; as in Heaven, Good is eminently comprized, and nothing but Good; ſo in Hell, all Evil is in exceſſive Degrees, and nothing but Evil; and as the Felicity of the Saints reſults from the Fruition of God in Heaven, and from Compariſon with the contrary State; ſo the Miſery of the Damned ariſeth both from the Thoughts of loſt Happineſs, and from the laſting Pain that torments them; the loſt Soul, rack'd with the fearful Contemplation of what it muſt ſuffer for ever, feels, as it were, at once, all the Evils that ſhall torment it in its whole Duration; the Perpetuity of the Miſery is always felt by Proviſion; as the Pain of Hell is endleſs, ſo it is likewiſe intolerable.

THAT is the greateſt Perfection of Miſery, to lie under the greateſt Torment, and yet be in Deſpair of ever finding the leaſt Eaſe.

WHILST we are in the Body, and immerſed in Senſe, we are moſt apt to be moved by ſuch Deſcriptions of Things as are ſenſible, and therefore the Torments of wicked Men in Hell, are uſually in Scripture deſcribed to us by one of the quickeſt and ſharpeſt Pains that human Nature is

ordinarily acquainted withal, by the Pain of Burning.

If Fire and Brimſtone ſerve only for Metaphors to deſcribe the Torments of Hell by, what will the real Sufferings of the Damned be? For the Spirit of God does not uſe to deſcribe Things by ſuch Metaphors, as are greater than the Things themſelves.

How muſt it embitter every preſent Torment to the Damned in Hell, to think that after they have conſumed Millions of Millions of Ages on the Rack, they have ſtill an eternal Hell behind, and are as far diſtant from the End of their Miſery, as they were when it firſt began!

Another Thing which does moſt contribute to the Deſpair of the Damned, is, when they conſider how great their Blindneſs has been, to renounce Heaven for ſo inconſiderable a Thing as all ſenſible Goods are; that for a little Pleaſure, which vaniſh'd away as a Dream, for a poor ſilly Intereſt, they ſuffer endleſs Torments; it is very uſeful to make timely ſuch Reflections, to ſave ourſelves the Sorrow of making them one Day to no Purpoſe.

If what diſturbs the Harmony of the Body, and breaks its Union with the Soul, cauſeth Pain, becauſe God hath ordered it ſo; what Torments hath he not appointed, for a Soul diſordered and ſeparated from him?

'Tis true we cannot loſe our Souls in one Senſe, that is, to loſe them, that they ſhall ceaſe to be; but we may loſe them in another, that we ſhould wiſh to loſe them even in that; that is, we may loſe that happy Eſtate, to which they were created, and plunge them in the extremeſt Miſery.

Tho' moſt bad Men, after Death, as certainly know what their Doom will be, as the Devils themſelves

themſelves do; yet there is Reaſon to think, that ſome bad Men are ſtill in Hopes of finding Mercy at the Day of Judgment; for elſe there can be no Account given, why they ſhould then put in any Plea for themſelves, or ſue for Mercy, as they are repreſented to do by our Saviour.

To anſwer the Objections of thoſe who oppoſe the Eternity of the Puniſhment of the Wicked, let it ſuffice to ſay, that this Method is conſiſtent with the Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and Equity of God, who, as the great Governor of the World, knows beſt what Puniſhments are moſt proper to reſtrain Men from the Violation of his Laws.

When a diſtracted Man is endeavouring to miſchief and deſtroy himſelf, it is Kindneſs to bind him, tho' it be with Chains of Iron; when therefore God found us ſo prone to injure ourſelves by wicked and miſchievous Actions, it was Mercy to bind our Hands with his Threatenings of eternal Puniſhments; and the ſtronger his Bands are, the more they expreſs his Kindneſs, becauſe the more they oblige us to be kind to ourſelves, and true to our own Intereſt.

If Men can but once perſuade themſelves, that the Torments of Hell are not ſo terrible, they freely give themſelves up to all Licentiouſneſs; and we know how fond Men of wicked Lives are of ſuch Doctrines: God therefore, perfectly underſtanding the Temper and Inclinations, the Stubbornneſs and Perverſeneſs of Men's Hearts, ſo prone to Vice, and ſo backward to all that is good, foreſaw that a leſs Puniſhment threatened, would not prevail with Men to forſake their Sins and get to Heaven.

Puniſhment is neceſſary to all Government, and God, as Governor of the World, muſt inflict Puniſhments; and what theſe are to be, it belongs to his Sovereign Wiſdom to appoint.

The Measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict Proportion betwixt Crimes and Punishments, but from one great End and Design of Government, which is to secure the Observation of wholesome and necessary Laws; and consequently, whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this End, are not unjust. So that whoever considers how ineffectual the Threatening even of eternal Torments is to the greatest Part of Sinners, will soon be satisfied, that a less Penalty than that of eternal Sufferings, would to the far greatest Part of Mankind have been in all Probability of little or no Force: And therefore, if any thing more terrible than eternal Vengeance could have been threatened to the Workers of Iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter Men effectually from Sin.

A Man is condemned to lose his Life for taking from another that which he perhaps could very well spare: but we are all agreed in the Justice of making such Examples; because we find, that Men can scarce be secure in their Lives and Estates, notwithstanding the Severity of such Laws; and if the Terrors of everlasting Torments will not frighten Men from Sin, what Effect would a less Punishment denounced, have had upon them?

The primary End of all Threatenings is not Punishment, but the Prevention of it; tho' Heaven and Hell, saith St. *Chrysostom*, be contrary to each other, yet they both aim at the same End, the Salvation of Mankind; the Joys of Heaven invite Men to it, and the Fears of Hell force those to Heaven, who otherwise would be regardless of their own Happiness.

It had seemed hard to suffer eternal Torments for a short Life of Sin, if there had not been eternal

nal Happineſs propoſed to as ſhort a Life of Virtue and Righteouſneſs: Thus Men are wont to ſet ſo much Loſs againſt ſo much Gain, and no Man pitieth him that might have gained as much as he hath loſt, if it had not been his own Fault, tho' the Loſs be never ſo great, and depended upon never ſo ſmall and ſhort a Trial.

The Juſtice of God is only concerned to puniſh Sinners; that their Puniſhments are eternal, is a neceſſary Conſequence of their Immortality; and this cannot be charged on God, unleſs it be a Fault to make immortal Creatures, and to preſerve and uphold immortal Creatures in Being, or to puniſh Sinners while they deſerved Puniſhment, that is, while they are Sinners; and there can be no Reaſon given, to prove that God ought to annihilate Sinners, to prevent their being miſerable for ever; but that will much more prove that God ought to have withdrawn his natural Concourſe from his Creatures, or to have annihilated them to prevent their Sinning, or, which is the laſt Reſult of all, and the only Fault, if there be one, that he ought not to have made an immortal Creature, who could ſin and be miſerable for ever.

We may reſt aſſured, that if it be any wiſe inconſiſtent, either with the Righteouſneſs or Goodneſs of God, (which he knows much better than we do) to make Sinners miſerable for ever, he will not do it; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a Puniſhment, which he could not juſtly execute upon them.

Tho' God's Threatening of eternal Puniſhments do not reſtrain him from doing what he pleaſeth; yet they cut off from the Sinner all reaſonable Hopes of the Relaxation or Mitigation of them.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Concerning our Saviour's Satisfaction.

OUR Sins, we know, in Scripture are compared to Debts; and no Law or Juſtice can require a Stranger, who is no way concerned in it, to pay another Man's Debts, and redeem him out of Priſon; but yet a good Man, who does ſo, does a very generous Act of Kindneſs, which had been unjuſt, had it been impoſed, but was great Goodneſs in him to do.

IT is neceſſary and eſſential to the divine Juſtice, that Sin ſhould be puniſhed; but that it ſhould be puniſhed in the Perſon of the Sinner, or in a Pledge repreſenting him, and ſuffering in his Room, 'tis arbitrary to God. Now there are Eight Conditions neceſſary to make that Tranſportation lawful; the *Firſt* is, that Sin be puniſhed; the *Second*, that the Chief Magiſtrate be willing, and injoins the Tranſportation ſhould be made; the *Third*, that he on whom this Tranſfer is made, yields to it alſo; the *Fourth*, that he be his own Lord and Maſter to diſpoſe of himſelf; the *Fifth*, that he be innocent, having had no Share in the Crime in Queſtion, and being guilty of no other; the *Sixth*, that the Sinners, whom the Impunity is granted to by that Tranſportation, give their Conſent to it; the *Seventh*, that God may be more glorified by it, than by the Puniſhment of the Sinners themſelves; the *Eighth*, that the Commonwealth ſuffers no Damage

mage by it, but rather receiveth ſome Advantage; all theſe Conditions are to be found in the Satisfaction which Jeſus Chriſt has made for the true Believers.

'Tis not at all likely, that if the Satisfaction had not been neceſſary, and that God might have pardon'd Sins merely upon Account of our Repentance, he had made Uſe of all that great Diſpenſation of ſending his Son into the World, of his Incarnation, Humiliation, and of the Blood of his Sacrifice.

The Declarations of the divine Mercy made under the Law, without mentioning any Satisfaction, are not of the Right of Nature, but of that of the Goſpel; they do not belong to the Law, but to Grace; they are made to the *Iſraelites*, 'tis true, but they are all grounded upon the Meſſiah, and his Satisfaction, and are Conſequences of God's Deſign of ſending his Son into the World, and of the Declaration he had made of it in the firſt Oracle, *The Seed of the Woman ſhall bruiſe the Serpent's Head.*

The Greatneſs of Offences is meaſured by the Greatneſs of the Party offended, and not by the Dignity of the offending Party; quite contrary, the Greatneſs of a Satisfaction is meaſured by the Dignity of him who makes it, and not by the Greatneſs of him who receiveth it.

It is certain, but very ſurprizing, that he, who is eminently perfect, ſhould be caſt down at the Sight of Death; and that his Servants, who borrow all their Strength and Virtue from him, ſhould triumph amidſt the greateſt Tortures: How comes this Difference, if not from this, that God affords more Comfort to the Souls of Martyrs, than to that of Jeſus Chriſt? And why ſo, if he does not look upon Jeſus Chriſt as being our

Pledge; if he looks upon him only as his Son, in whom he is well pleased?

The Price which Christ paid, was such as God the Father was pleased to accept of, not that it did in all Things equal the Offence and Misery from whence we are thereby redeemed.

Christ died for, or instead of all Men, not that they might actually and necessarily attain Salvation, but that on God's and Christ's Part a Way to Salvation might be opened to Men, thro' the Death of Christ, as of a Sacrifice slain for Sins, that the new Covenant might be ratified, and that the Sins of all who perform the Terms of the Covenant might actually be blotted out.

The procuring Remission of Sins by the Death of Christ, is common to all Men; but the actual Application of Remission, is peculiar only to the Believers, and the Converted.

CHAP. XXXV.

Concerning our Justification, *and a true* Saving Faith.

JUSTIFICATION is the merciful and gracious Act of God, whereby he fully absolves from all Guilt the truly penitent and believing Soul, thro' and for the Sake of Christ, apprehended by a true Faith; or graciously remits Sins upon the Account of Faith in Jesus Christ, and graciously imputes that Faith for Righteousness: We are not to fansy, that the Righteousness imputed to us is Christ's Righteousness, since the Scripture no-where speaks of any such Thing; but

but only that Faith is imputed to us for Righteousness, and this for the Sake of Christ.

We must reconcile the Doctrine of Justification by Faith without Works, to our being judged by our Works; and not expound away the Doctrine of our being judged according to our Works, to reconcile it to our Notions of Justification by Faith; for we must confess, it is not so certain, what is meant by Justification by Faith without Works, as what is meant by being judged according to our Works; at least so much must be allowed, that we must prefer that Sense of Justification by Faith, which agrees with our being judged by our Works, before any other Interpretation which contradicts or overthrows this plain Sense of a future Judgment.

St. *Paul* maintains, that Faith, or the Obedience of Faith alone, justifieth, in Opposition to those who pretended to the Law alone, or to the Law annexed to the Gospel. St. *James* tells us, that Faith without Works is so far from justifying us, that without good Works, 'tis a dead and lifeless Faith, in Opposition to those who maintained, that a mere Faith, or Assent to the Word of God, was sufficient without the Practice of Holiness; and now who is there that reasons rightly, but will freely acknowledge, that there is a plain and manifest Agreement between these two Apostles?

When we are said to be justified by Faith, some by Faith understand such a firm and stedfast Belief of the whole Gospel, of all that concerns the Person and Mediation of Christ, the Expiation of his Blood, his Resurrection from the Dead, and Intercession for us in Heaven, his Laws, his Promises and Threatenings, as renews and sanctifieth our Nature, governs our Lives, conquers the World, subdues the Flesh to the Spirit,

Spirit, and makes us truly divine and godlike Creatures, the Sons of God, not merely by external Relation, but by a Participation of his Nature: Now this Notion of juſtifying Faith, that no Faith can juſtify, but that which is fruitful in all good Works, is very reconcileable with being judged by our Works, ſince Holineſs is eſſential to it.

He that believeth, that is, he that effectually aſſents to the Doctrine of Chriſt, and is ſo perſuaded of the Truth of it, as to live according to it, ſhall be ſaved: A right Faith is wholly in order to a good Life, and is of no Value, any further than it hath an Influence upon it.

What Merit and Virtue is there in a preſumptuous Reliance on Chriſt for Salvation, to call him Lord, Lord, and not to do the Things which he hath commanded? Can we think that God will reward us for our Knowledge or our Faith, and overlook all the Evils and Impurities of our Lives? Will he reward us for that which deſerves no Reward, and not puniſh us for that which deſerves Puniſhment?

The Degree of Piety is commonly proportionable to the Degree of Faith; where there is no Faith, there is no Piety; where Faith is weak and faint, Piety is languiſhing and defective; the Unbelievers, who poſitively deny the Grounds of Religion, are not many; but there is abundance of thoſe who are doubting, or not fully perſuaded.

To make our Faith powerful, we muſt firſt confirm it by convincing Arguments, that it may be an undoubted Aſſurance, a certain Light, directive and perſuaſive, in the Courſe of our Lives.

Grace does not conſiſt in a Point, but is capable of Degrees; the new Creature may decline in

in Beauty and Strength, yet Life remain: Between a lively and a dead Faith, there may be a fainting Faith; as in St. *Peter:* for certainly our Saviour was heard in his Prayer for him, that his Faith ſhould not fail in his dreadful Temptation.

Let us imagine, that a Prince forgiveth a rebellious Subject, nay, that he is ready to load him with Riches and Honours, on Condition that that Man does accept the Pardon offered him, and that he does not fall again into the ſame Fault, and behaves himſelf better. Is there any Body ſo unreaſonable as to ſay, that that Prince's Clemency would be much greater, if he granted his Favours to that Wretch, tho' he ſhould continue in his Crimes? 'Tis, nevertheleſs, what ſome would have God do; we muſt give all, ſay they, to the Mercy of God; and muſt we give nothing to his Holineſs, Juſtice, and Truth?

CHAP. XXXVI.

Concerning Good Works.

Tho' we deny the Merit of good Works, yet we firmly believe the Neceſſity of them to eternal Life; and that is as good an Argument to perſuade a wiſe Man to do them, as if they were meritorious.

If we do in good Earneſt deſire the End, we muſt take the Way that leads to it; we muſt have our Fruit unto Holineſs, if ever we expect that the End ſhall be everlaſting Life.

CHRISTIANITY promiseth no other Crown than that of Righteousness, and therefore they that want the Righteousness, must want the Crown also.

CHRIST indeed is the Author of our Salvation, but Obedience is the Condition of it.

AS that Mercy by which we are saved, does not excuse us from good Works, so the Necessity of applying ourselves to good Works, does no way lessen the Riches of Mercy; and unless we admit Contradictions in the holy Scripture, we must own, that the Doctrine of Holiness does perfectly agree with the Doctrine of Grace.

OUR Religion must consist principally in a sincere Love and Affection to God, which expresseth itself in a real Conformity of our Lives and Actions to his Will.

LET us never measure our Godliness by the Number of Sermons which we hear, as if the Hearing many, were the certain Mark of a good Christian; but by the Store of Fruit we bring forth by them, without which all our Hearing will serve but to bring us into that heavier Portion of Stripes, which belongs to him that knows his Master's Will, and does it not.

THE great Business of Religion is to make Men truly good, and to teach them to live well; and if Religion have not this Effect, it matters not of what Church any Man enters himself; for most certainly a bad Man can be saved in none. Tho' a Man know the right Way to Heaven never so well, and be entered into it, yet, if he will not walk therein, he shall never come thither.

WE must needs have a Regard to God in our Actions, to make them truly good, and agreeable to our Duty; but that is not all, we must look to God, as to our only and last End.

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To make a good Action, its Principle muſt not only be the Love of God, but a predominant Love of God, a Love poſſeſſing the Heart, preferring God to all Things, and ready to loſe them all, rather than offend him.

It is an eaſy Matter to know which are the good, and which are the bad Intentions; the good are thoſe that have God for their End; therefore, whatever tends to pleaſe and obey him, whatever conduces to our Union with him, and even to that of other Men, and by Conſequence, whatever is profitable to our Salvation, and that of our Neighbours, all that makes ſo many good Intentions, which ought to be the Principle and Motive of all that we do: On the contrary, the bad Intentions are thoſe which neither mediately, nor immediately, tend towards God; from whence one may eaſily infer, that they all are either good or bad, and that there is none indifferent; for either they aim at God, and then they are good; or they have another Tendency, and then they are neceſſarily bad.

We do not eat, ſleep, reſt, directly and preciſely to glorify God, but indirectly we refer all thoſe Things to that End, when we make uſe of them with a Deſign to preſerve and maintain our Life, Health, Strength; and that we have a Mind to employ that Health, Life, and Strength, in the Service of God, and the Performance of his Will.

God never accepts the Deſire for the Deed, but where there is no Poſſibility, no Opportunity of doing the Thing deſired; but if there be, and the Thing be not done, there is no Reaſon to imagine that the Deſire, in that Caſe, ſhould be accepted as if the Thing were done.

Many Rounds make that Ladder wherewith we muſt ſcale Heaven; whereas one Step ſerves

to

to precipitate us into the Abyſs: He who lives in the Breach of any one Commandment of God, is guilty of all, becauſe he contemns that Authority which enacted the whole Law.

Since the Pleaſure of any thing reſults from the Agreement between it and the Deſire, What Satisfaction can ſpiritual Enjoyments give to a carnal Mind? Alas! what Delight would it be to the Swine, to be wrapt in fine Linen, and laid in Odours? His Senſes are not gratified by ſuch Delicacies, nor would he feel any thing beſides the Torment of being with-held from the Mire; and as little Complacency would a brutiſh Soul find in thoſe purer and refined Pleaſures, which can only upbraid, and not ſatisfy him: So that Holineſs is not only neceſſary to the Acquiring, but the Enjoyment of Bliſs hereafter.

We may eaſily ſuppoſe, that the Habits and Tempers of our Minds are as neceſſary to reliſh the Pleaſures of the next World, as our bodily Senſes are to taſte bodily Pleaſures; and ſince we do not particularly know what the Delights of that State are, and Chriſt doth, we ought as perfectly to reſign up ourſelves to his Directions for the faſhioning our Minds, as we truſt God to form our Bodies for us: Whatever Graces and Virtues he requires us to exerciſe in this World, we ought to conclude, that he knew the Reaſons of ſuch Commands, and that ſuch Qualities and Diſpoſitions of Mind will be found as neceſſary in the next World, as our bodily Senſes are here. We cannot imagine any other Reaſon, why our Saviour ſhould make any Acts of Virtue, which the State of this World does not require the preſent Exerciſe of, the neceſſary Terms and Conditions of our future Happineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Concerning Rewards *and* Puniſhments.

WERE it not that we are ſuch perverſe Creatures, as not to be wrought upon by Kindneſs, ſo wild as not to be tamed by gentle Uſage, God would not handle us in any other Way; it is our Obſtinacy and Intractableneſs to the Methods of his Goodneſs, which conſtraineth, and almoſt forceth him againſt his Inclination, to take the Rod into his Hands, and to chaſtiſe us with it.

THE Neglect of our Duty expoſeth to Puniſhment, but the Performance of it deſerves no Reward, becauſe no Advantage accrues to God by it, *who hath firſt given unto him, and it ſhall be recompenſed to him again.*

OUR Saviour rewards our Kindneſs, not our Work; and that maketh ſuch a vaſt Diſproportion between the Work and the Reward; for when the Reward is of Grace, not of Debt, no Reward can be too great for infinite Grace to beſtow, tho' it may be too great for our Works to deſerve. As *Alexander*, having ordered fifty Talents of Gold to be given to a Gentleman in Poverty, to ſupply his Want; and he, ſurprized with that immenſe Bounty, modeſtly ſaid, Ten were enough: He replied, if Fifty are too much for you to receive, Ten are too little for me to give; therefore do you receive as Poor, I will give as a King. Thus God, in the diſpenſing his Favours,

Favours, does not reſpect the Meanneſs of our Perſons or Services, but gives to us as a God.

What poor Man would not chearfully carry a great-Burden of Gold and Silver, that were aſſured to have the greateſt Share of it for his Pains, and thereby to be made a Man for ever? Whatever Difficulties Religion is attended withal, they are all ſweeten'd and made eaſy, by the Propoſal of a great and eternal Reward.

The ſeveral Hours of the Day, in the Parable of *Matt.* xx. 1. *&c.* do not ſignify the ſeveral Hours of Men's Lives, but the different Ages of the World; for the Deſign of that Parable is to ſhew, that the *Gentiles*, who were called into the Vineyard, or received into the Church of Chriſt, towards the Concluſion of the World, ſhould be admitted to equal Privileges and Rewards with the *Jews*, who were God's ancient People. If we expound it otherwiſe, it ſeems very unequal, that thoſe, who do very little Good at the Concluſion of their Lives, ſhould be equally rewarded with thoſe who have ſpent their whole Lives in the Service of God, which is a direct Contradiction to the Scope and Deſign of our Saviour's Parables about the Pounds and Talents.

As it would be impious and abſurd to ſay, that the Eſſence of God is arbitrary to him; that is, that it depends from his own good Pleaſure to be ſo, or not to be ſo: 'Tis likewiſe impious and abſurd to ſay, that it depends from his own free Will and good Pleaſure, to keep or break the natural Order which imports the Connexion between the Crime and the Puniſhment, between the phyſical and the moral Evil; that Order muſt be looked upon as inviolable, and uncapable of receiving any Alteration, becauſe it is eſtabliſhed upon a fixed, ſolid, and neceſſary Foundation;

Foundation, *viz.* The moral Virtues which are eſſential to the Godhead.

If Men ſhall be puniſhed for living againſt the Light of Nature, what Vengeance ſhall be poured on thoſe, who offend againſt the glorious Light of the Goſpel?

To conclude that God will not puniſh at all, becauſe he is patient and delays to puniſh; is to prove, that God cannot be juſt, becauſe he is good.

If any Sinner be free from outward Afflictions and Sufferings, yet Sin never fails to carry its own Puniſhment along with it; there is a ſecret Sting and Worm, that is bred in the Bowels of every Sin.

When we ſuffer any thing from Men, be it never ſo unjuſtly in reſpect of them, we are yet to confeſs it is moſt juſt in reſpect of God.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Concerning True Piety.

RELIGION begins in the Underſtanding, and from thence deſcends upon the Heart and Life: *If you know theſe Things*, ſaith our Saviour, *happy are ye, if you do them.* We muſt firſt know God, before we can worſhip him; and underſtand what is his Will, before we can do it: Ignorance, indeed, may be the Cauſe of Wonder and Admiration, and the Mother of Folly and Superſtition; but ſurely Religion is of a nobler Extraction.

THE Worſhip and Service of God do antecedently ſuppoſe our firm Belief and Perſuaſion of theſe two fundamental Principles of all Religion; that there is a God, and that he will reward thoſe that ſerve him.

IT hath been none of the Devil's meaneſt or unluckieſt Arts, to infuſe Prejudices into Mens Minds againſt Chriſtian Practice, by repreſenting it in the moſt averting Form; and how much more ready Men are to take the Devil at his Word, than Chriſt at his, who profeſſeth his Yoke eaſy, and his Burden light, appears too viſible in the general Averſeneſs thoſe have to Piety, who never ſo much as tried it.

GOD hath given us no Laws but what are for our Good; nay, ſo gracious hath he been to us, as to link together our Duty, and our Intereſt, and to make thoſe very Things the Inſtances of our Obedience, which are the natural Means and Cauſes of our Happineſs: The Devil was ſo far in the Right, when he charged *Job* that he did not ſerve God for nought; 'tis he himſelf is the hard Maſter, and makes Men ſerve him for nought, who rewards his Drudges and Slaves with nothing but Shame, and Sorrow, and Miſery.

As all Vice is naturally attended with ſome temporal Inconvenience, ſo the Practice of all Chriſtian Virtues doth, in its own Nature, tend both to the Welfare of particular Perſons, and to the Peace and Proſperity of Mankind.

'TIS true, the Difficulties of a religious Life are great at firſt, but they every Day abate and grow leſs; by Degrees the Work becomes eaſy, and turns into Pleaſure and Delight, and a Pleaſure ſo great, as none knows but he that hath it, which he would not exchange for all the ſenſual Pleaſures and Enjoyments of this World.

IN

In temporal Delights, Poſſeſſion uſually proves a nauſeating Thing, and takes off our Appetite; but it uſeth not to be ſo in ſpiritual, whoſe peculiar Property it is not to ſatiate, but excite by Fruition.

Besides, the inward Peace and Satisfaction, which is the Reſult of a pious Mind, it may enjoy, with more Pleaſure, the Goods of this World, than when we give a Looſe to our Deſires, and are led away Captives by our Luſts; and when we have habituated ourſelves in the Service of God, it is as uneaſy and difficult to commit wicked Actions, as it was at firſt hard to refrain them.

A religious Man muſt be generally much happier than the Wicked, in Truth and Reality, tho' perhaps, not in their Judgment of him, as enjoying more Eaſe and Satisfaction in himſelf, by a conſtant, unalterable Succeſs, in the Purſuit of his main End, as being leſs expoſed to the Injuries of others, by Reaſon of his aſſiſting ſome, and his taking due Care not to intrench upon the Happineſs of any; and as being better able to bear thoſe real Calamities and Miſeries which may happen to him, by a certain comfortable Expectation of ſuch Happineſs, as will infinitely outweigh all that he can ſuffer, within the Compaſs of this Life.

A ſubſtantial and ſolid, a diſcreet and unaffected Piety, will not only give a Man a Credit and Value, among the ſober and virtuous, but even among the vitious, and more degenerate Sort of Men.

Where Devotion is real, 'tis apt to be progreſſive, and the more we converſe with God, the more we ſhall deſire to do ſo; there are likewiſe in Religion, gradual Declinations as well as Advances.

THE ſureſt Foundation of Love and Friendſhip, is a Similitude of Temper and Diſpoſition. God and Man muſt be like one another, before they can take Pleaſure in one another.

RELIGION, indeed, did always conſiſt in an Imitation of God; but we may imitate him now with much greater Eaſe and Advantage, ſince God was pleaſed to become Man, on Purpoſe to ſhew us how Men may become like to God.

OUR Communion with God here is as true as in Heaven, but the Influence and Fruition is different according to our Capacity: When the Soul feels the vigorous Exerciſe of the Thoughts and Affections upon God, and the raiſed Operations of Grace in holy Duties, 'tis as certain a Sign of God's Favour and Acceptance, as when Fire deſcended from Heaven to conſume the Sacrifice.

NOTHING is an Act of Religion but as it reſpects God, and is referred wholly to him: To do never ſo many good Actions, to be ſeen and to be praiſed by Men, or to ſerve ſome ſecular Intereſt by it, is not Religion: Thoſe who are religious, do Good for God's Sake, and to approve themſelves to him; and if God will certainly judge us, there is none we are concerned to pleaſe but him, to be ſure, none in Oppoſition to him.

WHEN Men ſerve God for temporary Hopes and Fears; whenever the World promiſeth greater Proſperity, or threatens more terrible Things, they muſt neceſſarily change their Maſter; for they muſt take that Side on which the preſent Advantage lies.

TO diſcharge with Fidelity the Poſt in which God hath placed us, is Part of our Religion, and when juſtly performed, as acceptable as our Devotion; we may enjoy a great deal of this

World,

World, and yet be very good Men; 'tis not the Uſe, but Abuſe of it, that renders us obnoxious to God; we may endeavour after Riches, but not to ſet our Hearts upon them; Religion does not tie Men up from the Affairs of this World, it only teacheth them how to behave themſelves in it.

When theſe two Parts of Religion, *viz.* Exerciſes of Piety and Devotion, in private and publick, and the doing good and charitable Offices to others, come in Competition, Devotion is to give Way to Charity, Mercy being better than Sacrifice.

It is of very great Conſequence to repreſent Virtue and Piety under an eaſy and pleaſant Form, ſuch as is natural to it; and to have ſuch Notions of Religion, as will not, on the one hand, beget Security, and lull aſleep our Conſcience; nor, on the other hand, perplex the Mind and Heart with ill-grounded Scruples.

When God gives us his Laws, he knows he gives them to Men, and they have a perfect Agreement with the Condition of Man in this World: Therefore 'tis an extravagant Fancy to imagine, that an Angelical Holineſs is required to perform the Duties of Religion.

'Tis to be wondered at, that ſome Chriſtians ſhould preſume to ſay, That it does not belong to them to be religious, that neither their Profeſſion nor Time will allow them to be devout: Do they think that there are two Ways to go to Heaven, the one broad, the other ſtrait? Does not God give the ſame Laws to all? Have ſome more Reaſon to love God than others? And ought we not to be equally concerned for our eternal Salvation?

If it be a great Miſtake and Folly in worldly Men to make a wrong Judgment of Piety, is

it not a greater Folly ſtill, in thoſe who know better Things, to comply with an Opinion they know to be falſe and erroneous, and to rule their Behaviour by it?

A Chriſtian ought not to profeſs a moroſe and untractable Piety; he may keep a certain Decorum, and comply, as much as in him lieth, with the Opinions and Manners of thoſe he is to converſe with; nay, he ought ſo to do for Religion and Piety's Sake; but this Compliance and Regard become criminal, when it engageth to act againſt Duty and Conſcience; if the Cuſtom is bad, we muſt go from it, and againſt common Practice, do what God commands; we do not deſerve the Name of a Chriſtian, if we want Reſolution to do ſo; 'tis better to have leſs of that Genius and Gallantry which the World eſteems, than to purchaſe it by the Loſs of one's Innocence.

The Body being but the inferior Part of Man, is ſo to be treated, ſo dieted and provided, as to render it moſt calm and compliant with the Soul, moſt tractable and obſequious to the Dictates of Reaſon; not ſo pampered and indulged, as to encourage it to caſt its Rider, and to take the Reins into its own Hands, and uſurp Dominion over the better Part, to ſink and depreſs it into a ſordid Compliance with its own Luſts.

As there are Ways appointed to preſerve the Life of the Body, there are ſome likewiſe to maintain the Life of the Soul; and the Uſe of thoſe laſt Means is ſo much the more neceſſary, in that more Care and Caution is required for Salvation, and keeping the Soul alive, than for the Preſervation of the Life of the Body. A Man who would neither eat or drink, muſt needs die: And ſo likewiſe the ſpiritual Life muſt go out, when we do not uſe the only Means capable of preſerving it: We ought then to do for our Souls

Souls the ſame we do for our Bodies, feed them, heal and cure them when ſick, cloathe and adorn them, arm and defend them; the Food of the Soul is Knowledge; the Cure of its Diſeaſes (which are the Sins) is performed by an humble, ſerious, and hearty Repentance, which qualifieth us to partake of the Benefit of that Atonement made by our Saviour Chriſt: Our Souls are to be cloathed with holy and virtuous Habits, and adorned with good Works; the Armour of the Soul is Truth, Righteouſneſs, Faith, Hope, the Word of God, *Epheſ.* vi. 13, 14.

Frequenting God's publick Worſhip, and receiving the bleſſed Sacrament, are not only outward Teſtimonies of our inward Piety, but they are Means likewiſe appointed by God, to improve and confirm us in Holineſs and Goodneſs.

Can we poſſibly think it ſo intolerable to love the greateſt and the beſt Being; to praiſe and adore him to whom we owe ourſelves, and all we have; to ask the Supply of our Wants from him, who will be ſure to give, if we faithfully ask; to raiſe our Hearts above this World, which is a Scene of Vanity, Emptineſs, and Miſery, and to delight ourſelves in the Hopes and Expectations of great and eternal Happineſs?

What does Piety require of us, but what we do daily by criminal Motives? It requires that we ſhould curb our Paſſions: But does not Sin require the ſame Thing? And where will you find either an ambitious, or covetous, or revengeful Man, who does not put a Conſtraint upon himſelf? Piety obligeth us to ſmother up our Reſentments, and to forgive Injuries; but does not Covetouſneſs and Ambition, oblige us very often to the ſame Thing? Can we get Preferments in the World, by enduring nothing from

any body? Witneſs that Courtier's Anſwer, who being asked how he could maintain himſelf in Favour all his Life-time, ſaid, By receiving Affronts, and giving Thanks to thoſe who offered them: Piety requires we ſhould deprive ourſelves of ſome Pleaſures; but where is the Covetous, or Ambitious, who does not deny himſelf out of Intereſt or Pride? Nay, who does not know, that, in this, Ambition and Covetouſneſs out do Piety? Religion requires we ſhould abſtain from criminal Pleaſures; but Ambition and Avarice make us often deny ourſelves innocent ones: Piety requires we ſhould work, and be buſy; but it does not demand that we ſhould work ourſelves to Death, and with too much Application: On the contrary, Vice keeps no Bounds, and there is nobody but knows ſuch a covetous, or ambitious Man, ſuch a Handicraftſman, ſuch a Merchant, ſuch a Stateſman, who labours ten times more hard than a Galley Slave, or a Labourer, who muſt get Bread for himſelf and his Children. Piety requires we ſhould run the Hazard of loſing our Lives, and even ſhould loſe them upon ſome Occaſions; but did never Sin do the ſame? Or rather hath it not done it much oftener? Let there be an Account taken up of all thoſe who died by reaſon of ſome Sin they had committed, and becauſe they had committed it; let there be put together all the condemned Malefactors, all quarrelſome, proud, and haughty Men, who have provoked others to kill them; all thoſe who have been killed in War, by a Motive of Sloth, Ambition, or Intereſt; in a Word, all thoſe who have been put to a natural, or violent Death, by Sin; then let there be a juſt Eſtimate made with all thoſe, who, from the Creation of the World till now, have loſt their Lives for Truth's Sake, or for ſome good Action

they

they did, it will be found, that the laſt do not make up the hundredth, may be, not the thouſandth, or ten thouſandth Part of the former.

One may reckon three Sorts of Men in reſpect to Piety: The firſt are thoſe who prefer all before God; the ſecond are thoſe who, on the contrary, prefer God before all Things; the third and laſt, in ſome Manner, keep a Medium; for on the one hand, they prefer God before many Things; and on the other, there are ſome they prefer before him; the firſt are the Impious, the ſecond are the true Children of God, the laſt are Demi-Chriſtians.

To abſtain from Sin, becauſe we are afraid to loſe by it the Eſteem and Approbation of Men, is what worldly Men and Hypocrites do every Day; to abſtain from Sin for Fear of Puniſhment, is to act like a Slave, who obeys his Maſter only for Fear of being beaten; to forbear ſinning, becauſe Sin hath ſomething in itſelf unworthy of Man, and contrary to the Excellency of his Nature, is no more than what we have Inſtances of in the heathen Philoſophers; but to abſtain from Sin, becauſe we will not diſpleaſe God, and oppoſe his Will, is to act by the moſt noble and commendable Motive imaginable.

To excite in us a fervent Devotion, we muſt firſt ſtudy to ſtrengthen and eſtabliſh our Faith; we muſt endeavour to doubt no more of revealed Truths, than we do of what we ſee with our own Eyes; nay, 'tis not enough to be perſuaded of them, we muſt meditate and reflect upon them: Above all, it concerns us to conſider, that Life is ſhort, that Eternity, which will infallibly follow it, ſhall have no End; that on the other Hand, it will be unchangeable; that if it proves happy, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould ever be

be miſerable; that if it proves unhappy, 'tis impoſſible, I will not ſay, that we ſhould become happy, but that we ſhould have the leaſt Intermiſſions of the ſaddeſt Sufferings; from thence we may infer, that the greateſt Concern we may poſſibly have, is that of avoiding thoſe Miſeries, and enjoying that Happineſs: to ſucceed in all other Undertakings, and fail of this alone, is to loſe all; and on the contrary fail in others, and ſucceed in this, is to get all.

Every Virtue which does not proceed from that Veneration we owe to God, from his Love, and our Deſire to pleaſe him, is a falſe and unprofitable Virtue; therefore thoſe Virtues which go together with ſome Vice, being only the Effects of our Temper, Education, Intereſt, Pride, and other ſuch-like Principles of our Actions, not of the Love of God, and of his Grace, are mere Counterfeit.

It were well if Men would live as if any body ſaw them; but to live as if ſome worthy and excellent Perſon were always preſent with us, and did obſerve us, this will be a far greater Curb upon us; and ſhall not the Preſence of the divine Majeſty, be an eternal Reſtraint upon us?

It is very fit, that he who hath promiſed Happineſs, as exquiſite as we are capable of enjoying, ſhould require Holineſs, as perfect as we are capable of attaining.

Tho' we ſhould enjoy every thing elſe, we are poor if we do not enjoy God; and we cannot enjoy him, but by giving ourſelves up intirely to him.

The new Man is not made in an Inſtant, he begins by imperfect Conceptions, he grows but by Degrees, and often requires a long Time before his Birth.

Very

VERY often remember and meditate upon the Wounds and Stripes, the Shame, and the Pain, the Death, and the Burial, of our Lord Jesus; for nothing will more enable us to bear our Cross patiently, Injuries charitably, the Labour of Religion comfortably, and censuring Words and Detractions with Meekness and Quietness.

CHAP. XXXIX.

Concerning the Fear of GOD.

THE Fear of God is nothing else but such an awful Regard of him, as may keep us from offending him.

CAN we think we do at all fear God, when that Fear has so little Power over us, that tho' it be back'd with the many present Mischiefs that attend upon Sin, it is not able to keep us from them?

To fear God as we ought, we must fear him as a Father; and to love him as we ought, we must love him as a sovereign Lord.

How great is our Injustice and Blindness, when out of a Regard for Men, we have none for God? What would People say of a private Man, who out of Fear of offending an inferior Magistrate, should disobey and affront the King? There is, nevertheless, a much greater Distance from the greatest and most mighty Man, to God, than there is from the weakest and most contemptible Man, to the most powerful; nothing then is more detestable than such a Fear of displeasing Men, as makes us not to care at all for

for displeasing God; it implies so profane a Contempt of his Greatness, Authority and Power, that we can neither abhor it enough, nor have too frightful a Notion of it.

That Fear, whereby we are afraid lest we should fall from the Practice of Piety, and thereby forfeit the divine Grace, of which we are Partakers, is so far from being repugnant to perfect Love, that 'tis a manifest Token of it.

Hope and Fear are necessary to bring us to Heaven; Fear without Hope chills and stupifies the Vigour and Alacrity of the Soul, that it cannot come to God; and Hope without Fear makes it vain and careless of its Duty, and liable to be overthrown by every pleasing Temptation.

As an honest and innocent Man does know the Punishments which the Laws of his Country denounce against Felons, Murderers and Traitors, without being terrified and concerned at them; so a Christian in Truth as well as in Name, tho' he believeth the consuming Vengeance prepared for the Disobedient and Unbelievers, is not at all dismayed at the Apprehensions of it; but he knows, that if he fears him who is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell, he needs not fear that his own Soul and Body shall ever go thither.

CHAP.

CHAP. XL.

Concerning the Knowledge of our Spiritual State.

THERE are but two Things necessary to evidence to Men, that they are the Children of God; that the general Course and Tenour of their Actions be agreeable to the Laws of God; and that they be sincere and upright in those Actions; and both these every Body may sufficiently know concerning himself; for what can a Man know concerning himself, if not the Reality of his own Intentions?

That a Man may know whether his Love be greater for the Things of this World, than for the Enjoyments of Heaven, let him ask his Heart seriously these following Questions: Is my Joy greater when I make a Progress in Virtue, than when I gain any of this World's Good? Am I more grieved at my falling into Sin, than at any temporal Loss? What do I think of first, when I awake in the Morning? What am I most willing to discourse of, and hearken to? Are they earthly and temporal, or are they spiritual and heavenly Things?

When we have a Mind to know ourselves, we must not only examine our Actions; we may 'tis true, have a Regard to them; but we must chiefly look to the fixt and constant Disposition of the Heart, to that Answer of a good Conscience mentioned by St. *Peter*.

There

THERE is a great Difference between committing actually some Sin, and being always ready to commit it; the First is a Misfortune which may befal a Child of God, but the Second is a Disposition inconsistent with true Holiness, and particularly with the Love of God above all Things.

CHAP. XLI.

Concerning Christian Perfection.

CERTAINLY we cannot better learn how God would have Men to live, than by seeing how God himself lived, when he was pleased to assume our Nature, and to become Man; so it is manifest, that all the Perfection of a Christian's Life consisteth in Imitation, and following of the Virtues of our Saviour Christ.

THOSE who pretend to Perfection in this Life, do neither understand the Law of God, nor themselves; and besides other Imperfections, these two are evident in them, Ignorance and Pride.

WHEN Christ commands us to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect, no body will assert, that any Equality, but only a Likeness of Perfection, is prescribed, *viz.* that we should sincerely endeavour after Holiness, even as God himself is Holy.

THE Love of God makes the Perfection of a Christian, and if any body should fully discharge that Duty, he would have no further Progress to make in Piety.

If there be any Greatneſs of Soul in the worldly Man, and if he raiſeth himſelf ſomewhat above the common Sort of People by deſpiſing what is vulgarly eſteemed; the Chriſtian raiſeth himſelf ſo much above the worldly Man, ſince he can ſet at nought what the other makes the Object of his moſt earneſt Deſires, and is willing to take for the Reward of his greateſt Troubles.

Conquerors have no Fight to maintain but with their Enemies; but the Chriſtian muſt endeavour to overcome himſelf: Conquerors have none but Men to oppoſe them, but the Chriſtian hath to do with Men and Devils: Conquerors do not fight all their Life-time, but the Chriſtian muſt be Doing and Fighting without Intermiſſion, from the firſt Inſtant of his having intended to be ſaved, to the Time of his Death.

'Tis eaſier to ſet a Man againſt all the World, than to make him fight with himſelf; and yet this every Man muſt do, who, from any wicked Courſe of Life, betaketh himſelf ſeriouſly to Religion; a Chriſtian, when he firſt enters upon a holy and good Courſe of Life, is repreſented as two Perſons or Parties at Civil Wars one with another, the old and the new Man; but this Trouble laſts but for a little while, theſe Pangs of the new Birth, are not uſually of long Continuance.

Religion is at firſt a Yoke and Burden, but unleſs we take this upon us, we ſhall never find Reſt to our Souls.

'Tis fit for us ſometimes to abridge ourſelves ſomewhat of our lawful Pleaſure, or Eaſe, or Profit; ſo that we may get ſuch a Maſtery over ourſelves, as to be able to renounce all, when our Obedience to God requires it.

If

If it be a hard Saying, *Take up my Croſs, and follow me*; it is an harder, *Go, ye Curſed, into everlaſting Fire.*

Then only can we be ſaid *to take up the Croſs*, when, having a Means of eſcaping it by a Sin, we rather chuſe to endure it, than commit the Sin; for then it is not laid on us, but we willingly chuſe it.

That Degree of Obedience which is neceſſary to Salvation, is alſo poſſible for a faithful and regenerate Man to perform, *viz.* not a ſinleſs or abſolutely perfect Obedience; but ſuch as conſiſts with a ſincere Love and Habit of Piety, which excludes all Habit of Sin, with all enormous and deliberate Actions; God requireth that we ſhould love him, not above, but with all our Strength. It is evident, that nothing exceeding our Abilities is required at our Hands; and 'tis to be noted, that the Love of God conſiſts in obeying his Commands; therefore, if a hearty Obedience be paid to the divine Commands, God alſo is loved with all the Heart, and with all the Strength. The Sincerity and Integrity of Love then is commanded, and that Love is ſincere which proceeds from a Heart unfeigned, and is not divided or interrupted by any intervening Sins, but this is not out of a Man's Power to perform.

It is with the new Man as with the natural Man, who is born an Infant, ſtammers in his Infancy, and comes to Perfection but by gentle and inſenſible Degrees.

We cannot climb Heaven in a Moment; the Way to Happineſs is but by Degrees, and narrow too. O! how bad is he who thinks himſelf too good to be made better!

Tho' Man's Law reacheth not to our Thoughts, yet God's doth; ſo that whatever he forbids in the

the Act, he forbids likewise in the Thoughts and Desires.

Our State being, not that of a sound, healthy, but of a sick Man, God hath a Regard to our Infirmities, he bears with our Imperfections, provided we acknowledge our Weakness with Humility and Sorrow.

The moral Actions of Jesus Christ are proposed to our Imitation, but his Miracles are only matter of our Admiration; and it would be a ridiculous and blameable Presumption to pretend to imitate them, or his Acts of Mediator.

CHAP. XLII.

Concerning Martyrdom.

The Spirit of Martyrdom is necessary to every Christian, and he who makes a Confession of the Truth, only because he can do it without Danger, and who would be ready to disown it, if he could not exempt himself from it, without losing his Life, is no Child of God, since he loveth his Life more than he doth God; therefore, tho' we may want the Occasions of Martyrdom, we must so dispose ourselves, that we may not be wanting upon Occasions.

If our Circumstances admit of no other Choice, but either sinning, or suffering the Loss of our Lives, or the Loss of our Virtue, we owe it then not only to God, but to ourselves, rather to quit this House of Flesh, than bring the glorious Inhabitant into Danger of being buried in its Ruin,

which is not to expoſe ourſelves when we might be ſafe; but when we cannot be ſafe in our whole Perſons, to redeem one Part with another, the Better with the Worſe, rather than willfully caſt both away into everlaſting Flames.

'Tis not poſſible for any to be God's Martyr, who is not firſt his Servant: None of us will ſuffer the greateſt Things for a Perſon, for whom we will not do the leaſt; and 'tis abſurd Hypocriſy for a Man to pretend that he hath left all for God, who we ſee cannot be woo'd to leave the moſt deſpicable Luſt for him; he that will not part with the Noiſe of a loud Oath, the Pleaſure of an intemperate Cup, the Applauſe of a prophane Jeſt, for God, will ſurely much leſs expoſe his Liberty, his Eſtate, his Life for him; and therefore, what Hazards ſoever any Man run in any of thoſe, he can in no Juſtice ſet it upon God's Account, unleſs he can produce ſuch other Acts of Obedience, as may witneſs this to be true and genuine.

He that cannot prevail with himſelf to live like a Saint, will much more hardly be perſuaded to die a Martyr.

How many are there, that have made themſelves the Devil's Martyrs, ſuffered ſuch Torments in the Purſuit of ſome Sins, as would exceed the Invention of the greateſt Tyrant! Surely they that pay thus dear for Damnation, very well deſerve to enjoy the Purchace.

Some of the Primitive Chriſtians, who were urged by all that is dreadful to Fleſh to renounce their Religion, told their Perſecutors, that Life was not ſweet to them, if they might not live Chriſtians, nor Death bitter, if they muſt die for Chriſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIII.

Concerning the LOVE *of* GOD.

AS human Love is all the Passions, according to the different Respects under which it considers its Object; so divine Love is all the Virtues.

OUR Love towards God considers him, either as the chief Good, and the Fountain of all Happiness, and then 'tis a Desire of Union with him, and enjoying his Favours; or else as Legislator, and then our Love consists in obeying all his Commands: This latter is founded on the former; for 'tis because we love God as the supreme Good, the Source of Happiness, and desire to be united to him as such, that therefore we obey him as our Legislator, in order to enjoy him as our chief Good.

ALL those who love God obey his Laws, the Reason of that is plain; all those who truly love God, have no stronger Desire than that of being beloved by him; but we cannot be beloved of God without pleasing him, and we cannot please him without obeying his Commands.

WHEN we are truly possess'd with the Love of God, we easily part with what he would have us to forsake; then we follow the Bent of our Heart, by leaving what we do not love, that we might cleave to what we love; if we love God, and do not love the World, we gladly leave the World to be united to God.

How can we imagine that we love God without desiring to please him, to serve and glorify him; or that we desire to please him, to serve and glorify him, without seeking after the Ways and Opportunities to do it, without endeavouring and working for it?

If we love God, we shall have no greater Delight than that of conversing with him; and as that Conversation consists in two Things, in hearing him, and speaking to him, 'tis by the Delight we find in these two Parts of our Duty, that we may know if we love him.

We do not mind God, because we mind the Things of this World; and we mind the Things of this World, because we love them; therefore, that we may mind God, we must love him.

If we can neither do nor wish God any Good he does not enjoy, we at least rejoice for those he enjoys; if we cannot wish him any Perfections he wants, we may at least wish that those he hath may be known and reverenc'd in all the World; nay, we may do something in order to it, we may be grieved to see him injured, and his Will opposed; 'tis what is called Zeal, which makes up one of the most considerable Parts of the divine Love; especially we may endeavour to do what we know to be pleasing to him; and indeed, 'tis what is most essential to the disinterested Love, to avoid Sin, the Thing that he hates most, and to apply ourselves with all our Strength to the Practice of Virtue, the Thing that is most acceptable to him.

God would have us to prefer him before our Reputation, worldly Interest, Pleasure and Life; and which of all these Things do not we daily sacrifice to our Passions? We do it gladly, in order to our Destruction; how come we to be so averse to do it, in order to our Salvation?

God

God who is ſo great and ſo dreadful, delights in being loved by Men; he permits them, he commands them to do it. Should we not look upon that Permiſſion and Command, as upon one of the greateſt Obligations he has laid upon us, inſtead of complaining of it?

Jesus Christ requiring that we ſhould love him above all Things, requires nothing but what he has done for us; or rather he requires but a ſmall Part of what he hath done.

God may not only very juſtly require of Men, that they ſhould love him above all; but 'tis impoſſible he ſhould excuſe them from the Obſervation of that Duty, and if there be any Duty which may be ſaid to be of natural Right, if there be any one unalterable, this without Doubt muſt be ſo.

Our Heart is made for God only; for 'tis in him alone it can find what it deſires, and what it wants.

He loveth God too little, who loveth any Thing beſides him, except he love it for his Sake.

There is a neceſſary Connexion between theſe Things, and it cannot be otherwiſe, but that from the beſt Good clearly known, there will flow the greateſt Love, drawing along with it the greateſt Delight, and the moſt perfect Repoſe.

The Meaſure of the Love of God, is to love him without Meaſure.

I am ſent into Exile, ſaid a Holy Man; I am very unfortunate, if I be confined to ſome Place where God is not.

Did but the Love of God rule in our Hearts, and had we as real an Affection for him, as ſome Men have for their Friends, there are no ſuch Difficulties in Religion, but what Love would conquer.

He that chuſeth ſincerely, is joyful and vigorous in the Uſe of Means for acquiring his moſt deſired Good: Ardent Affections like *Elijah*'s Chariot of Fire; raviſh the Soul above this ſenſible World, to the Place where God dwells in Glory.

Ought not the Love of Chriſt to conſtrain us? Could he do any Thing more for us, than redeem us from Death and Hell? Could he redeem at a dearer Rate, than with his own Blood?

Who can ſufficiently admire the Love of Chriſt, that ſo great a Majeſty ſhould ſtoop ſo low, and ſuffer ſo much for ſo poor and ſo evil deſerving Wretches, with Purpoſe to advance us to ſo bleſſed a Condition? Who can meditate on his wounded Body without a wounded Soul, or view his pierced Side without a pierced Heart? We had been undone for ever but for him; for him then, and for his Sake, what is it which we ſhould not do?

CHAP. XLIV.

Concerning the Love *of our* Neighbour.

We ought to love God, merely becauſe he highly deſerves to be loved; and our Neighbour, becauſe he is the Image of God, and that together with him we make up but one myſtical Body of Jeſus Chriſt.

He that loveth his Neighbour will do him no Hurt, but will do him all the Good he can; and this divine Love of Men reſults from the Love of God,

God, whose Creatures they are, and whose Image they bear, and therefore includes the Love of God as its Cause; for there is no other Principle of universal Love and Charity, tho' of particular Friendships there is.

Charity does not merely consist in loving and wishing well; but in loving and wishing well, because those we love are the Images of God, the Objects of his Love, the Vessels of his Grace, and Heirs of his Glory; that Love which proceeds from other Principles, avails nothing to Salvation.

St. *Paul* calls Charity the Bond of Perfectness; that is, a perfect Bond, which joins us together with God and our Neighbours, not suffering that any Thing should cause a Separation, nor any Thing in us contrary to that Holy Communion: He saith that Charity proceeds from an unfeigned Faith, because our Love for God, and by consequence for Men, derives its Original from our Knowledge and Persuasion of the Love of God towards us.

Whenever any Necessity of our Neighbour presents itself to us, let us ask ourselves, Whether, if we were in the like Case, our Love to ourselves would not make us industrious for Relief? And then let us resolve to make our Love to our Neighbour have the same Effect for him. There is none but wisheth to have his good Name defended, his Poverty relieved, his bodily Sufferings succoured; only it may be said, that in spiritual Wants, there are some so careless of themselves, that they wish no Supply, they desire no Reproofs, no Instructions; nay, are angry when they are given them; it may therefore seem, that such Men are not by virtue of this Rule tied to those sorts of Charities: To this I answer, That the Love of ourselves, which

is ſet as the Meaſure of that to our Neighbour, is to be underſtood, to be that reaſonable Love which Men ought to have; and therefore, tho' a Man fail of that due Love he owes himſelf; yet his Neighbour has not forfeited thereby his Right to ſuch a Degree of our Love, as is anſwerable to that which in Right we ſhould bear to ourſelves, and ſuch certainly is the Care of our ſpiritual State.

That Charity which reflects upon myſelf, may alſo ſometimes ſuperſede that to my Neighbour, the Rule obliging me to love him as not better than, myſelf: I need not ſure ſilently aſſent to my own Defamation, for fear of proving another a falſe Accuſer; nor ſuffer myſelf to be made a Beggar, to conceal another Man's being a Thief; 'tis true, in a great Inequality of Intereſts, Charity (whoſe Character it is *not to ſeek her own*, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 15.) will prompt me to prefer a greater Concern of my Neighbours, before a ſlight one of my own; but in equal Circumſtances, I am ſure at Liberty to be kind firſt to myſelf: So in a Shipwreck, if I can take hold of a Board which can bear up but one Man, I may take it for myſelf; and indeed, if Charity alone ſhould oblige me to yield it to another, who is in the ſame Danger, it would oblige him likewiſe to yield it to me; and at this Rate, we ſhould be both under an Obligation of periſhing; all indiviſible Goods would remain uſeleſs, and all thoſe which may be divided, muſt at leaſt be equally ſhared, which would cauſe endleſs Confuſions, Perplexities, and Uncertainties.

Christianity does not, as ſome have miſtaken the Matter, require us to be inſenſible of any Provocations, nor make all ſorts of Reſentment inconſiſtent with Charity, and a good Conſcience; nor does it debar us of the Benefit of human

Laws,

Laws, when Right and Property are invaded, nor exact an equal Degree of Kindneſs and Affection to the inſolent and injurious, as to the beſt Men, and beſt Friends; it allows a juſt Indignation, where the Glory of God, the Good of the Publick, or the Security of our own Perſons, Eſtates and Reputations, are highly concerned; but it would have us put up ſmall and ſupportable Injuries, rather than be vexatious and peeviſh; and even where our Proſecutions are moſt juſt and neceſſary, it forbids Malice and Rage, to aim at the Suffering and Trouble of them that have offended us, but only at our own fitting Reparation, the Honour of Juſtice, and the Preſervation of Government and Order, the Benefits of Society, the real Merits of the Cauſe, and the reducing ill Men to a Senſe of their having exceeded, and a ſincere Repentance, and better Behaviour for the Time to come.

To give ſome of what we have enough and to ſpare, to help others without any Inconveniency to ourſelves, is not a very great Token of Love; but that Love appears ſtrong and ſincere, when we deprive ourſelves of what might have been uſeful, and what we wanted for ourſelves; 'twas on that Account that our Saviour preferr'd the two Mites of the poor Widow to the moſt noble Gifts of the Rich; and 'tis that very Reaſon ought to make us admire what the Widow of *Sarepta* did.

'Tis not out of our Love for others, that we carry ourſelves handſomely and civilly with them; 'tis out of Intereſt, 'tis in order to ſucceed the better in our Deſigns; on the contrary, Charity, which does nothing for itſelf, but works only for others, does not mind what will more get us the Love and Eſteem of others, but what will be

be most profitable and beneficial to our Neighbour.

When what we intend to say or to do, may put any Hindrance to our Neighbour's Salvation, it is neither lawful for us to say or to do it, if there be not besides some other stronger Reason to say or to do it.

Charity, 'tis true, believeth all Things; but it does not oblige Men to disbelieve their Eyes.

Why do we Christians of several Persuasions so fiercely argue against the Salvability of each other, as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Interest, and our Will, that all should be damned but those of our particular Sect?

Jesus hath loved you to that Degree as to die for you, and you will not love your Neighbour, that you may live more happily, or at least more quietly with him; Jesus admits you to his Table, tho' Criminals and Rebels; he feeds you with his Body, and you refuse to do Good to your Enemies; the Hand which has received that Gift from Heaven, ought not to be employed in doing Harm to his Brother; the Mouth and Lips which have been sprinkled with the Blood of their Redeemer, must no longer be defiled by Slanderings, and injurious Words; and the Heart, which hath been sanctified by that Holy of Holies, must be acted with nothing but Love and Charity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLV.

Concerning SELF-LOVE.

BY that Self-love which is condemned, is not meant that true Love of ourselves, which is the Love and Care of our Souls; but that immoderate Love of our own worldly Interests and Advantages, which is apparently the Root of all both Injustice and Uncharitableness towards others.

THERE is nothing capable of loving, which does not love itself; all Men love themselves, the most Godly not excepted; and Jesus Christ took it for granted, when he commanded us to love our Neighbours as ourselves; nay, St. *Austin* maintains, That there are none but good Men who can properly and strictly be said to love themselves, because there are none but them who mean well and do well for themselves. *Adam* in the State of Innocence loved himself, and 'tis what God presupposed, when, to hinder him from eating the forbidden Fruit, he threatened him with Death, if he ate of it. God loveth himself, and as he is infinitely worthy to be loved, he also loveth himself without Bounds and Measure: Who durst after that condemn Self-love, finding it in the Fountain and immutable Rule of Holiness?

WE must not confound Self-love with the Manner of loving one's self; 'tis not in our Choice to love ourselves, but we may love ourselves in this,

this, or that Manner, well or ill, wiſely and diſcreetly, or after a blind and inconſiderate Way, by ſeeking after Goods true or falſe, real or apparent, and ſuch or ſuch of either; much after the ſame Manner as it is with Thinking: We cannot help your Thinking, but we may think on ſuch or ſuch a Thing, think upon it much or little, ſlightly or intenſively; ſo likewiſe 'tis impoſſible but that we ſhould love ourſelves; but we may love ourſelves very different Ways.

If the Love of ourſelves is ſuch as it ought to be, we ſhall wiſh to be happy, to enjoy God, to ſee his Face, that we may love and glorify him, and be eternal Monuments of his Mercy and Goodneſs; but that Self-love we are poſſeſſed with, is ſo blind, and ſo ill managed, that it moveth us to do preciſely what we ſhould do, if we did hate ourſelves with all our Might.

Can we in the leaſt queſtion, but that that Love which tends only to increaſe our Vices and Miſery, is a diſorderly, or rather very extravagant Love? Such is however the Love of all Sinners without Exception.

We love nothing but ourſelves, as if we ſhould ſee nothing lovely any-where elſe; if we will love nobody, we muſt reſolve to be loved by nobody; we muſt be without other People's Help, if we would have them to be without ours: But what will become of us, if God does not love us? Indeed the Help of Men is not ſo neceſſary to us as that of God; but, however, we cannot well be without it; 'tis by thoſe mutual Aſſiſtances Men afford one another, that they in ſome manner free themſelves from thoſe Miſeries which otherwiſe would overwhelm them in a Solitude, or in a Society where every one ſhould only work for himſelf.

There

THERE are a hundred Caſes in which Men ſay they do not perceive they are guilty of any Sin, and if another ſhould do the ſame thing, they would find Fault; if any body ſhould deal with them as they deal with others, they would complain of their Injuſtice towards them; ſo much are we blinded by our own Intereſt.

SELF-LOVE looks upon the Chriſtian Morality as a mere Idea of Perfection, when it injoins us to renounce our evil Inclinations; it believeth itſelf unable to practiſe it; but it looks upon it as very juſt, rational, and perfect, when the Vices and Imperfections of others are to be reſtrained, unleſs it be depraved to the higheſt Degree; it is very well pleaſed that this Bridle ſhould curb, at leaſt in others, the Luſts and Paſſions which tend to the Deſtruction and Violation of all.

LET People call Things as they pleaſe, Vices and Virtues in the Heart of worldly Men, are nothing but a Commerce of Self-love: What can be done to remedy this Evil, and to ſettle a Principle of Virtue as true and as lawful, as Self-love is an impure and corrupted Spring of it? Engage Men to love God above all Things, and you have attained your End; for as the Preference of ourſelves before God is the Soul of all Vices, we cannot doubt, but that the Preference of God before ourſelves, will be the Soul of all Virtues.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVI.

Concerning the Love of this World.

THIS World, at the beſt, is but a very indifferent Place; and he is the wiſeſt Man that bears himſelf towards it with the moſt indifferent Affection, that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to ſtay in it as long as God pleaſeth.

We are placed here in this World but for a little while, and that wholly in order to our Preparation for a better and a happier Life.

THIS Life is of ſo ſhort and inconſiderable a Duration, that it matters not much what Entertainment we meet withal, as we are paſſing through this World: He is the happy Man, who is ſo in that Life which ſhall never have an End; and he is miſerable, that ſhall be ſo for ever; but if the Happineſs of the next World were no greater, nor of any longer Continuance, than the Miſeries of this World, or if they did equally anſwer one another, yet a wiſe Man would chuſe to have Miſery firſt, and his Happineſs laſt.

IT is true, the Things of this World are preſent and ſenſible; but ſo long as we have ſufficient Aſſurance of the Reality of a future State, and of the Rewards and Puniſhments of it, the Greatneſs and Eternity of theſe is ſuch an amazing Conſideration, that no Diſtance can render them inconſiderable to a prudent and thinking Man.

ALL

All the Enjoyments of this World are mix'd, and uncertain, and unſatisfying; nay, ſo far are they from giving us Satisfaction, that the very ſweeteſt of them are ſatiating and cloying.

He that enjoys the greateſt Happineſs of this World, does ſtill want one Happineſs more; to ſecure him for the future what he poſſeſſeth for the preſent.

We purſue the Happineſs of this World juſt as little Children chaſe Birds; when we think we are come very near it, and have it almoſt in our Hands, it flieth farther from us than it was at firſt.

Man is a miſerable Creature, if what is his Happineſs be not laſting; and a very fooliſh Creature, if he placeth his Happineſs in what is not laſting.

To value Things for their Uſe, is to value them no farther than they are uſeful; and this is the only Value which is due to Things which we muſt leave, for they can be only for preſent Uſe.

I know not, indeed, what the Pleaſures of the next World are; but no more did I know what the Pleaſures of this World were, till I came into it; and therefore that is no Argument that there are no Pleaſures there, becauſe I do not yet know them; and if there be any Pleaſures there, ſurely they muſt be greater than what are here, becauſe it is a more laſting State; the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs hath certainly reſerved the beſt Things for Eternity.

A wiſe Man ſhould thus reaſon with himſelf; If I grow ſo fond of this Body, and the Pleaſures of it, if I value nothing elſe, what ſhall I do when I leave this Body, when I ſhall be a naked Soul, or whatever other Covering I may have, ſhall have no Fleſh and Blood about me?

THOSE who reſolve to take their Fill of this World while young and ſtrong, and to grow ſober and religious when they grow old, do, as it were, reſolve to be damned, unleſs they live till they are old, or till they grow weary of their Sins, and learn more Wiſdom by Age and Experience.

IF Men had the ſame Opinion of this World whilſt they live, as they will have when they are to die, they would not inordinately ſeek it.

WHAT is this lower World that chains us ſo faſt? 'Tis the Devil's Circuit, wherein he rangeth, ſeeking whom he may devour; 'tis the Theatre of Contentions; the Low aſpire to riſe, the Exalted fear to fall; the Poor envy the Rich, and the Rich deſpiſe the Poor; 'tis a foreign Country to the Saints, and as Pilgrims and Strangers, they are liable to Reproaches, Injuries, and hard Dealings, from the Wicked, the Natives of the Earth: What is the preſent momentary Life that ſo enamours us? 'Tis ſurrounded with Temptations, oppreſſed with Fears, ardent with irregular Deſires, and continually ſpent in Vanity or Vexation; in Adverſity 'tis depreſſed and melancholy, in Proſperity fooliſh and proud; 'tis a real Infelicity, under the deceitful Appearance of Felicity.

ALL the Wickedneſs of Mankind, is owing to too great a Fondneſs and Paſſion for this World.

'TIS natural, indeed, for a Man to love Pleaſure, Riches, and Honour, and to be averſe to their Contraries, Pain, Poverty, and Contempt; there is nothing ſinful in ſuch an Affection; but then it becomes criminal, when it tranſgreſſeth thoſe Bounds which God hath fixed, when our Love to the Enjoyments of this World becomes inordinate, and our Hearts and Affections are indifferent

indifferent, as to the Happiness of the other Life; that is, when we are eager in the Pursuit, anxious in the Possession, and murmur at the Loss of worldly Pleasures, Riches, or Honours; whilst we are remiss and careless, cold and indifferent in our Desire after spiritual Things, and unconcerned whether we have, or have them not: Hence it appears, that a free, but moderate Use of the Things of this World, is not condemnable, since God, when he made them, pronounced them to be very good; but it is the Abuse of them, either in the inordinate Desire, or in the extravagant Enjoyment of them, that is properly sinful.

To seek for Satisfaction in the Creature, and forsake God, is as if one desirous to see the Light, should withdraw from the Presence of the Sun, to borrow it from a weak Ray reflected by some obscure Matter.

Whatever is not perfect may amuse us for some time, but it cannot give us an intire Satisfaction; for that Reason, those Men who have that Love for the Creatures, which they ought to have for God alone, are obliged to change continually the Object of their Love; because, notwithstanding the Delight they take in deceiving themselves, they find that what they love, does not deserve so perfect a Love; but they only change their Error, they run still after some Creature, to make it the Subject of their Affections.

When we come into the World, whatever occasions in us some Pleasure, seems to be the supreme Good, and we stick to it as if it were really so; as we grow old, we are undeceived, and are convinced, by a thousand Experiences, that the Creatures are not capable of making us happy, and, nevertheless, we seek them as if

they were ſo; the whole of Morals conſiſts in beſtowing our Affections right, in ſeeking after Happineſs where it is truly to be found, and to deſire it earneſtly.

The Diſguſt we take after the Enjoyment of what we ſought after here on Earth, that Uneaſineſs we find amidſt the moſt reliſhing Pleaſures, that Trouble which the moſt pleaſing Company is not able to remove, and that earneſt Deſire we have for a greater Happineſs than that we can find here below, are ſo many convincing Arguments, that all the Affections of the Soul have another End than the Creatures; if we incline towards them, it muſt be but ſlightly, in our Way to God as the End of all our Deſires.

When we beſtow our Love upon Creatures, robbing God of it, 'tis an Injuſtice diſhonourable to us, and an Injury done to God, and to ourſelves; to God, becauſe we take away from him what belongs to him; to ourſelves, becauſe we deprive ourſelves of an Honour we were deſigned for, and which we may lawfully aſpire to.

If the Creatures had been made for Man, and Man for the Creatures, the Enjoyment of the Creatures would make the Happineſs of Man; he would find in them his Reſt, and he ſhould want nothing elſe to rid himſelf of his Uneaſineſs; but as it is not ſo, 'tis certain that Man can as little be happy by the Enjoyment of the Creatures, as Fiſhes would be in the Air, or Birds in the Water, or under the Earth; Man was not made for the Creatures, but for the Creator.

Moſt Sins conſiſt only in ſome one of theſe three Things; either in ſeeking after ſome Goods God is not willing we ſhould enjoy; or in purſuing, with too much Eagerneſs, thoſe God is not unwilling we ſhould enjoy; or in uſing

uſing unlawful Means for the obtaining either of them.

We ought to deny ourſelves (not always, I confeſs, but often) even innocent Pleaſures, if they are like to enervate our Soul, to faſten it immoderately to the Earth, and take away from it the Reliſh of heavenly Things: *Every Man that ſtriveth for the Maſtery, is temperate in all Things*, &c. *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection*, &c. 1 *Cor.* ix. 25, 26, 27.

We ſhall eaſily root out from our Heart the immoderate Love of the Earth, and its Vanities, if we will but ſeriouſly conſider theſe three Things: The infinite Diſproportion between Time and Eternity; the Unprofitableneſs of the Goods of this World in relation to that Eternity; and the Impoſſibility to be ſaved, without being reclaimed from that Love.

The great Bent of our Mind for earthly Goods proceeds from the Union of Soul and Body, from the Prejudices of our Childhood, in an Habit of being led only by our Senſes, in an ill Education we have received, and in the Infection by our Intercourſe with worldly Men.

The Soul can no more move two oppoſite Ways at the ſame time, than the Body; what draws it near one of the Extremes, neceſſarily removeth it from the other; therefore, as much as it is in love with the Earth, ſo much it muſt needs be unconcerned for Heaven, and deſpiſe it.

'Tis not out of Hatred, Fancy, or Vanity, that the Chriſtian will not ſhare in the Pleaſures of this World; he knows they make us forget God, and as he purſues after all that can bring him to an happy Eternity, he goes from all that might turn him away from it.

We may give a Place in our Hearts to thoſe Objects whoſe Love is not inconſiſtent with that

of God; but they must never pretend to take up the first Place; that first Place is for God; to set him in the second Rank, is to disgrace him, nay, to make any other Object even with him, is an Affront; where-ever he is, he ought to sit alone upon the Throne.

Worldly Men are guilty for desiring, with so much Blindness, what cannot satisfy them; but they are not so for being unsatiable after the Enjoyment of what ought not to satisfy them: So 'tis a Fault in the Covetous to thirst always after new Riches; but it is a Perfection not to be satisfied with so small a Thing.

He who liveth under the Conduct and good Government of a good Conscience, takes Care to regulate his Affections towards the Things of this World, so as neither to fear the Evils of it too much, nor love the Goods of it too well; but maketh a just and equal Estimate of both, and by that proportions his Affections towards them; and he who does this, disarms them of their tempting Power, which is chiefly owing to ourselves, and the false Estimate we make of them.

It is very plain, that if Men would but take that Care for their immortal Souls, which they generally do for their frail and dying Bodies, and be as heartily concerned for the unseen World, and for Eternity, as they are for Things visible and temporal, they would with much more Certainty gain Heaven, than any Man can obtain worldly Riches and Honour.

God and Reason have set us no other Bounds concerning the Use of sensual Pleasures, but that we take Care not to be injurious to ourselves or others, in the Kind or Degree of them; and it is very visible, that all sensual Excess is naturally attended with a double Inconveniency, *viz.* bodily Pains and Diseases, and Guilt and Remorse

morſe in the Mind; and theſe are, beyond Compariſon, the two greateſt Evils in this World, a diſeaſed Body, and a diſcontented Mind.

It being manifeſt, that our main and happy End conſiſts not in ſecular Riches and Honours, and the Pleaſures of Senſe, but in the clear Viſion of God, the Bleſſedneſs of the Spirit; it follows, that all preſent Things are in our Uſe ſo far good or evil, and to be deſired or not, as they are profitable or prejudicial to our obtaining Salvation, as they conduct or divert us from Heaven.

Tho' 'tis no eaſy Matter for a Man that hath wholly bent his Affection to an immoderate Love of this World, to bring under his unruly Deſire; he ſhall hardly begin to think what he is, why he was ſent hither, and whither he is haſtening, but he ſhall ſtop in the Middle, and the very Thoughts of the preſent put him upon enjoying it in another Manner.

By denying our Deſires once or twice, we ſhall perceive how much eaſier and ſweeter it is to deny a Luſt, than to ſatisfy it.

Some Men call nothing good or evil, but what is good or evil to their Bodies; others think, and with much greater Reaſon, that we ſhould take our Souls into the Account too; that whatever is for the Eaſe and Pleaſure of our Minds, whatever adorns and perfects a reaſonable Nature, is a natural Good to Men, as Wiſdom and Knowledge, well-governed Paſſions, &c.

Abundance of People imagine, that nothing can ſtir up God's Jealouſy, but the Worſhipping of other Objects; and that they have nothing to fear from it, tho' there are ſome Things they love with all their Heart: They abhor the Sin of thoſe who are ſtained with the leaſt Spot of Idolatry, and they make no Scruple to worſh p

the World, and to give up intirely their Hearts to its deceitful Goods.

THE World we are forbidden by the Word of God to ſet our Hearts upon, is by no Means the World of Nature, the Work of the Wiſdom and Power of God: 'Tis another World, made by the Devil and Sin out of all the unlawful Objects of our Deſires, out of Pleaſures, Diverſions, Riches, Honours, Pomp, Splendor, and other ſuch-like Amuſements of carnal Men.

WHEREAS ſenſual Pleaſures prevent us, we ſhould prevent them by wiſe Conſiderations, which ſhould make us miſtruſt them.

WAS it not requiſite, that all thoſe Actions which conduce to the Preſervation of the Life of every Man in particular, and of the whole Kind, ſhould be attended with ſome Pleaſures? And now, becauſe there are Drunkards and Gluttons, muſt God take away the Strength of Wine, and the pleaſant Reliſh of Meats?

THE World is crucified unto us, when we look upon it with the ſame Horror and Indignation, that we look upon one that is crucified; and we are crucified to the World, when we are willing the World ſhould look upon us after the ſame Manner.

WE come into this World, not to ſtay here, or to take up our Abode and Reſt; but this World is only a State of Trial and Diſcipline, to exerciſe our Virtues, to perfect our Minds, to prepare and qualify ourſelves for the more pure, and refined, and ſpiritual Enjoyments of the other World: We come into this World, not ſo much to enjoy, as to conquer, and to triumph over it, to baffle its Temptations, to deſpiſe its Flatteries, and to endure its Terrors; and if we live long enough to do this, we live long enough.

What

What labouring Man is not glad that his Work is over, and he may go to Reſt?

To eat, and drink, and enjoy the more impure Delights of Fleſh and Senſe, is not the true End of living; but they are only Means to preſerve Life, which God hath ſweetened with ſuch proper Satisfactions, or made the Neglect of them ſo uneaſy and painful, that no Man might forget to take Care to preſerve himſelf; but Man was made at firſt for higher and nobler Ends.

It is no great Wonder, that Men who feel the Workings and Motions of no higher Principle of Life in them, but Fleſh and Senſe, ſhould imagine that they are nothing but Fleſh themſelves.

If this Life be our Time to work in, we ſhould not conſult our Eaſe, and Softneſs, and Pleaſures here; for this is a Place of Labour and Diligence, not of Reſt; we are a travelling to Heaven, and muſt have our Eyes on our Journey's End, and not hunt after Pleaſures and Diverſions in the Way.

As a Traveller is continually tending towards the Term and End of his Jonrney, and has it always habitually in his Intention, tho' he does not always think of it every Step he takes, and does many Things which do not directly ſet him forward, but are no wilful Deviations from it; ſo it ſhould be with us, while we are ſojourning in this World, our fixed Aim and Deſign ſhould be to get to Heaven, and thither we ſhould be continually tending in our Deſires and Endeavours.

The preſent State of Mankind in this World being a State of Trial and Diſcipline, to reclaim and reform Sinners by the various Methods of Grace and Providence, that changeth both the

very Notion and Exerciſe of God's Goodneſs and Juſtice in this World; for we muſt expect no more of either, than what a State of Trial and Diſcipline will allow.

A State of Diſcipline muſt neither be a State of perfect Happineſs, nor Miſery; and ſuch is the State of this Life; ſo happy, as few Men are ſo miſerable as to be weary of it; and yet ſo intermixt with Troubles, as to exerciſe the Virtues of good Men, and to correct the Wicked; and this is what becomes the Goodneſs of God to do for us in a State of Diſcipline.

What we cannot enjoy, is nothing to us, how excellent ſoever it be; and to enjoy it but a little while, is next to not enjoying; for we cannot enjoy it always. This ſhews us what Value we ought to ſet upon this World, and all Things in it.

Tho' Death will ſeparate us from this World, we are not ſure that it will cure our earthly Paſſions; we may ſtill find the Torment of ſenſual Appetites, when all ſenſual Objects are removed.

Sensual and ſpiritual Joys are ſo contrary to each other, that which of them ſoever prevails, according to the Degree of its Prevalence, it ſtifles, or ſuppreſſeth, or wholly ſubdues the other; and according to the Degree of our Love to preſent Things, ſo much the more indiſpoſed are we for the Happineſs of unbodied Spirits.

If we were as happy as this World could make us, we ſhould have no Reaſon to complain, that we muſt exchange it for a much greater Happineſs: We now call it Death to leave this World; but, were we once out of it, and inſtated in the Happineſs of the next, we ſhould think it were dying indeed, to come into it again.

We

We may certainly conclude, that God would not remove good Men out of this World, were this the happieſt Place; or, that tho' all Men are under the Neceſſity of dying, yet, if this World had been the happieſt Place, God would have raiſed good Men to have lived again in this World, which he could as eaſily have done, as have tranſlated them to Heaven.

CHAP. XLVII.

Concerning RICHES *and* HONOURS.

SO often as we conſider what incredible Induſtry Men uſe for the Things of this Life, and to get a ſmall Portion of this World, we have Reaſon to conclude, that either Men do not believe the Rewards of another World, or that they do not underſtand them; elſe they could not think much to be at the ſame Pains for Heaven, that they can chearfully beſtow for the obtaining of theſe corruptible Things.

'Tis vain for him to pretend to love either God or Man, who loves his Money ſo much better, that he will ſee his poor Brother (who is a Man, and bears the Image of God) ſuffer all Extremities, rather than part with any Thing to relieve him.

'Tis not a great Eſtate, and vaſt Poſſeſſions, that make a Man happy in this World, but a Mind that is equal to his Condition, whatever it be.

The ſhorteſt Way to be rich, is not by inlarging our Eſtates, but by contracting our Deſires.

The

The covetous Man labours of an incurable Want, becauſe he wants that which he hath, as well as that which he hath not; he is guilty of an Idolatry beyond that of offering the Children to *Moloch*; for he ſacrificeth himſelf to his God *Mammon*, whilſt he often deſtroys his Health, his Life, yea finally, his Soul too, to ſave his Purſe: Between the Care of getting, and the Fear of loſing, the covetous Man enjoys no quiet Hour; therefore every Man is deeply concern'd, as he tenders his Happineſs, either in this World or the next, to guard himſelf againſt that Sin; which he can no way do, but by poſſeſſing his Heart with the Virtue of Contentedneſs.

In reſpect of other Men, we are indeed true Proprietors of our Eſtates; but in reſpect of God, we are but Stewards, and he will call us to an Account how we have laid them out.

All Perſons of high Quality ought to remember, that they differ no more from others, than as a Counter ſet in the Place of Thouſands or Hundreds, does from one ſet in the Place of Tens or Units: A little Tranſpoſition may quite alter the Caſe, or however, when they are all taken off the Score, they are then indiſcriminately tumbled together, and one hath no Precedence of another, either in Place or Value.

He who deſires to be great only in the Kingdom of Heaven, laughs at the buſy Aſpiring of ſecular Greatneſs, and wonders at the Force of that Inchantment, which engageth Men with ſo extreme Toil, to climb a tottering Pinacle, where the Standing is uneaſy, and the Fall deadly.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Concerning REPUTATION, *and a* GOOD NAME.

WHAT Conſcience is in reſpect of God, that Fame is in reſpect of Men; therefore, next to a good Conſcience, a clear Reputation ought to be to every Man the deareſt Thing in the World: When a Man is once come to this, not to care what others ſay of him; the next Step is, to have no Care what himſelf does.

PRAISE is nothing elſe but the good Opinion of other Men concerning us, and Reproach, their ill Opinion; and if they be miſtaken in their Opinions, they make us neither better nor worſe, unleſs we make ourſelves ſo: but the World may ſuffer by it; for a good Man, when he is unjuſtly reproached, tho' he may ſupport himſelf by a Senſe of his Innocence and Virtue; yet he loſeth the Pleaſure and Freedom of Converſation, the Authority of his Example and Counſels, and many Advantages and Opportunities of doing Good.

IF we are deſirous of ſome Reputation, let it be rather that of being good Men, than that of being what the World calls Men of Honour; that worldly Honeſty is nothing but an Union of ſome few Virtues with many Vices; whereas what makes up a good Man, is an unmixt, ſolid, and ſincere Piety; but if we wiſh to be eſteemed good Men, let us much more wiſh to be really ſo.

THERE

THERE are no other true Heroes, but thoſe who do every Thing for God's Sake; their Greatneſs is as much above that of worldly Heroes, as the Eternity, which thoſe who love God ſhall enjoy, is above that which can laſt no longer than Marble and Metals, and which is eſtabliſh'd only in the Memory of Men, who are very apt to forget what is paſt.

CHAP. XLIX.

Concerning Man's *true* Happineſs.

A GOOD to anſwer all the Wants, Deſires, Fears and Hopes of human Nature, muſt be; *1ſt*, all-ſufficient; *2dly*, perfect Goodneſs; *3dly*, firm and unchangeable in itſelf; *4thly*, ſuch as none can take away from us; *5thly*, eternal; *6thly*, able to ſupport and comfort us in every Condition; *laſtly*, ſuch as can give perfect Reſt and Tranquillity to our Minds.

THOSE who ſeek for Happineſs in the Vanity of the Creatures, are always deſirous of Change, and have their Judgments ſo corrupted, that while they languiſh after a ſecret Deſire, after an unchangeable Good; yet they conceive no Good as deſirable that is not changed.

THE Soul is a ſpiritual Subſtance, and therefore its objective Happineſs muſt be ſo too; the Soul is immortal, and therefore the Object which makes it happy muſt be of eternal Duration; the Deſires of the Soul are very vaſt and extenſive, nay infinite, and therefore not to be ſatisfied, but by an infinite Good.

'TIS

'Tis the highest Happiness of the reasonable Creature to know and love God; for he is a spiritual, infinite, unchangeable Being, and can fully communicate all that is requisite to intire Blessedness, supply all the Wants, and fulfil all the Wishes of the immortal Soul.

If once we own that God is the supreme Happiness of Man, we must acknowledge that our Felicity upon Earth depends from our well-grounded Hope of enjoying God hereafter in Heaven.

Since by our very Nature and Constitution, we find ourselves irresistibly determined to seek and endeavour after Happiness, and to avoid Misery; we have all the Reason in the World to conclude, that Happiness is the ultimate End of our Being, and all our Actions; and therefore God, who made us after this Manner, having also made it necessary for us to approve such and such Actions, and to judge them fit to be done, and to condemn others as not fit to be done; we cannot conceive it possible that he should make it necessary for us to approve such Actions, and to judge ourselves obliged to do them, as would not tend to our Happiness.

Since God has made us capable of Happiness, and designed us for it, and we find ourselves necessarily determined to aim at this End: Since the only Way of attaining this End is by our Actions, and we are assured by Experience, that all our Actions do not lead to it, but that Misery, as well as Happiness, may be the Effect and Consequence of our Actions, it follows from hence, that there must be one particular Way of acting, which, if steadily pursued, will certainly procure us greater Happiness, than we can possibly attain by any other.

THO' there is nothing more uniform and inviolable than the natural Inclination to Happineſs; yet the great Diſtinction of Mankind ariſeth from this Source, the regular or perverſe Uſe of this Inclination, the wiſe or miſtaken Choice of Happineſs.

THE Choice of true Happineſs neceſſarily includes the deſpiſing and rejecting of the falſe Happineſs, that ſtands in Competition with it.

THAT we may not fall into the double Miſery of being deceived with a falſe Happineſs for a little Time, and deprived of true Happineſs for ever, it is neceſſary to have, *1ſt*, a ſound and ſtedfaſt Belief of unſeen eternal Things; *2dly*, to conſider ſeriouſly the vaſt Difference between Things that are the Objects of Sight, and thoſe that are the Objects of Faith.

IT is peculiar to God to be his own Happineſs; but Man, becauſe he is finite, and therefore cannot be Self-ſufficient, is carried forth by an innate Deſire of Happineſs, to ſeek his Felicity in God.

THE Pleaſure of every Being conſiſts in the vigorous Exerciſe of its Faculties about convenient and agreeable Objects; but the Faculties of a Soul are Underſtanding and Will, to which the only agreeable Objects are Truth and Goodneſs; and therefore, the more Truth there is in the Mind, and the more Goodneſs there is in the Will, the more vigorouſly they employ and exerciſe themſelves about them, and conſequently the more they will be pleaſed and raviſhed.

WHEN a God of infinite Truth and Goodneſs becomes the objective Happineſs of a finite Nature, which cannot comprehend and enjoy him, but in an infinite Succeſſion, every new Delight the Enjoyment of him creates in us, muſt neceſſarily raiſe a new Deſire, and every new Deſire imme-

immediately find a new Delight, and ſo round again to all Eternity.

If we would have God for our Happineſs, we muſt be ſure to make him our Friend; and there is but one way to eſtabliſh a firm Friendſhip between God and us, and that is by doing his Will, and living in Obedience to his Laws; *Ye are my Friends*, ſays our bleſſed Lord, *if ye do whatſoever I command you.*

Goodneſs is an eſſential Ingredient of Happineſs, and as without Goodneſs there can be no true Majeſty and Greatneſs, ſo neither any true Felicity and Bleſſedneſs; for a Man may as ſoon be well without Health, as happy without Goodneſs.

There is ſo ſtrong a Connexion between the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, that a Man may as reaſonably expect to be well and at Eaſe without Health, as to be happy without Holineſs.

Our End is everlaſting Happineſs, and the Way to it is a conſtant, and ſincere, and univerſal Obedience to the Commandments of God.

'Tis no great Matter how rough the Way be, provided we be ſure that it leads to Happineſs.

Tho' we cannot gueſs what the Pleaſures of glorified Bodies are, yet ſure we cannot imagine, that when thoſe earthly Bodies are the Inſtruments of ſo many Pleaſures, a ſpiritual and glorified Body ſhould be of no Uſe.

Could we ſee the other World, and beforehand taſte the Pleaſures of it, or know what they are, it would be no Act of Faith to leave this World for it; but no Man is worthy of Heaven, who dares not take God's Word for it; and therefore God has concealed thoſe Glories from us, and given us only a Promiſe of a great, but an unknown Happineſs.

Good

Good Men have enough of this World, and are ſufficiently ſatisfied that none of theſe Things can make them happy. If there be ſuch thing as Happineſs to be found, it muſt be ſomething which they have not known yet, ſomething that this World does not afford.

The Deſire of Happineſs is the general Principle of all our Actions; if the one chuſeth to be a Soldier, if this prefers a quiet to a laborious Life, and that to work rather than be at Reſt; 'tis however that Deſire which inclines them all the Way they go, according as they think they will find Happineſs here or there; but God is the Object of that Deſire, as well as the Author of it, ſince it is natural, and that we have nothing but what we have received from him.

'Tis a ſad and deplorable Thing, when God calls, and Man does not anſwer; or when Man crieth to God, and God does not hear him; but how pleaſant is it, when God calls on one Side, and Man anſwers on the other? 'Tis from the Union of theſe two Voices the Glory of the Creator, and the eternal Happineſs of the Creature do ariſe.

The due Performance of any religious Action is never properly the Cauſe of any Pain or Trouble to him that performs it, however in ſome Inſtances it may ſeem to be the Occaſion of it.

Holiness is not only neceſſary to the Happineſs of the next Life, but to our preſent Peace and Contentment; for it is as impoſſible for a wicked Man to be happy and contented in himſelf, as it is for a ſick Man to be at Eaſe.

As every Vice is naturally attended with ſome Inconvenience of Pain or Loſs, ſo there is no Grace or Virtue but does apparently conduce to a Man's temporal Felicity: Some tend to the Health of his Body, as Temperance and Chaſtity; others

others to Riches and Plenty, as Diligence and Induſtry in our Callings; others to the ſecure and peaceable Enjoyment of what we have, as Truth, Fidelity, Juſtice and Honeſty; ſome others are apt to oblige Mankind to us, and to gain their Friendſhip and good Will, as Kindneſs, Meekneſs, Charity.

He that, in any Condition of Life, hath enough to anſwer his Conveniences, ſuch a Man is more truly rich, than he whoſe Revenue is a thouſand times greater, if it be not equal either to his Occaſions or his Mind.

There are ſo many natural Calamities, ſo many caſual, which no human Mind can foreſee or prevent, that one may be leſs miſerable than another, but none perfectly happy here.

The Foundation of Hell is laid in the evil Diſpoſition of a Man's own Mind, which is naturally a Torment to itſelf; and till this be cured, 'tis as impoſſible for him to be happy, as for a Limb that is out of Joint to be at Eaſe, becauſe the Man's Spirit is our of Order and off the Hinges.

CHAP. L.

Concerning what we are moſt concerned to Know and to Do.

THE Care of Religion and our Souls is the one Thing neceſſary, and that which every Man is concerned, in the firſt Place, and above all other Things, to mind and regard; and it does conſiſt, 1*ſt*, in the diſtinct Knowledge and firm Belief and Perſuaſion of thoſe Things which

are neceſſary to be known and believed by us, in order to our eternal Salvation; 2*dly*, in the frequent Examination of our Lives and Actions, and in a ſincere Repentance for all the Errors and Miſcarriages of them; 3*dly*, in the conſtant and daily Exerciſe of Piety and Devotion; 4*thly*, in avoiding thoſe Things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby Men do often hazard their Soul; 5*thly*, in the even and conſtant Practice of the ſeveral Graces and Virtues of a good Life.

The Salvation of our Souls is needful as a neceſſary End, and the Practice of true Religion as ſubſervient to that End; if to eſcape eternal Miſery, and to obtain eternal Happineſs, be not neceſſary, I know not what can make any Thing neceſſary.

What can be of greater Moment to us, than to know whether there is a God or no? Whether our Souls are to periſh with our Bodies, or are to ſubſiſt eternally? And, in Caſe it be ſo, whether, in that eternal State appointed for Men after this Life, we ſhall be happy or miſerable, according to our Behaviour in this World?

The learned Man muſt own, that there is but one Knowledge neceſſary, that is the Knowledge and Science of holy Men; *viz.* to know God, as much as it is requiſite to know him in order to love him.

If we are ignorant of the Will of God, 'tis becauſe we will not know it; nevertheleſs the only Buſineſs of Men ſhould be to examine what God requires of them.

We have but one Thing to take Care of, and we are ſafe: Let us make God our Friend, and he will raiſe us up Friends, and Patrons, and Protectors, will deliver us out of the Hands of our Enemies, and make our Enemies to be at Peace with us.

Let

LET not all our Inquiry be, What ſhall I eat, or what ſhall I drink, or wherewithal ſhall I be cloathed? But ſometimes let us ask ourſelves this Queſtion, What ſhall I do to be ſaved? I have an immortal Spirit; it is but fit ſome Care ſhould be taken of that, to train it up to Eternity.

WHAT have we our Reaſon for, but to reflect upon ourſelves, and to mind what we do, and wiſely to compare Things together, and, upon the whole Matter, to judge what makes moſt for our true and laſting Intereſt, to conſider our whole Selves, our Souls as well as our Bodies, and our whole Duration, not only in this World, but in the other, not only with Regard to Time, but to Eternity; to look before us to the laſt Iſſue and Event of our Actions, and to the fartheſt Conſequence of them, and to reckon upon what will be hereafter, as well as what is preſent?

ALL that our Saviour requires at our Hands, is only that we ſhould act according to the Laws of a reaſonable Nature, and conſtantly purſue the great End of our Creation; which can never be obtained by us, unleſs we regulate our Actions by thoſe wiſe and excellent Rules, which he has preſcribed us upon no other Inducement, but only to oblige us to be happy; for, when all Things are duly conſidered, it will appear, that all the Reſtraints which the Laws of God lay upon Men, are highly reaſonable, and greatly for their Benefit and Advantage; for theſe Laws are not arbitrary Conſtitutions, and mere Inſtances of Sovereign Will and Power, but wiſe Rules and Means to procure and advance our Happineſs.

CAN we be ſuch Wretches as to refuſe to ſerve our Saviour, when he requireth nothing of us, but what we are obliged to by our own Intereſt? Are we ſo loſt to all that is ingenious and modeſt, that we will not obey him, when he only requires

us to be kind to ourselves? Oh wretched Mortals! does his coming down from Heaven to save you deserve this barbarous Treatment at your Hands, that to spite him you should injure yourselves, and wound his Authority through your own Sides?

CHAP. LI.

Concerning the Wisdom *of* Good Men, *and* Folly *of* Sinners.

THAT cannot be Wisdom which mistaketh its great End, which minds mean Things, and neglects those which are of greatest Concernment to us but that is Wisdom, to mind and regard our chief End, and by all Means to promote it: And this Regard to our chief End does express itself chiefly in these Particulars; in our being firmly fixed and resolved upon it, in chusing the fittest Means for the Compassing and Accomplishing of it, in a diligent Use of those Means, in an invincible Constancy and Perseverance in the Prosecution of it, and in making all Things to submit and to stoop to it.

IT is not imaginable, that a clear-sighted Soul, that seeth a Good infinitely great, should reject it for mean Things, to please the lower Desires; we may as probably imagine, that a skilful Jeweller would part with the richest oriental Pearls, for Cherry-stones to play with Children.

HEAVEN is a Felicity so glorious and attractive, that, if duly considered, no Man can possibly

ſibly refuſe it; and Hell is a Miſery ſo extreme and fearful, that, if ſeriouſly laid to Heart, none can poſſibly chuſe it. The laſt End is to be conceived under the Notion of an infinite Good, without the leaſt Mixture of Evil, to which the human Will, ſway'd by the invincible Impreſſion of Nature, hath a Tendency; the Liberty of Indifference is with reſpect ſo ſome particular good Things, which may be variouſly repreſented, ſo as to cauſe Inclination or Averſion. That thoſe Men who believe eternal Life is the Reward of Holineſs, yet with a careleſs Inadvertency neglect their Duty; and that eternal Death is the Wages of Sin, yet ſecurely continue in it, is more wonderful, than to ſee Martyrs ſing in the Flames, and the great Cauſe of it is the Neglect of Conſideration.

Put the Caſe, that it is very uncertain, whether there will be an eternal Life or no; nay, put the Caſe that it is ten to one, that it is much more probable, that there will not be any ſuch Life after this; yet, when we conſider what Eternity is, and what a vaſt Difference there is between living in perfect Joy, and in everlaſting Burning; and when we conſider withal the Shortneſs of this preſent Life, and how little we can loſe in it by abſtaining from Sin; and how little we can ſuffer in it by the ſtricteſt Holineſs and Virtue, even the bare Poſſibility that there will be an eternal Life, tho' we had no certain Revelation, and no other very good Aſſurance given us of it, would be abundantly ſufficient to deter us from Sin, and to ſtir us up to Well-doing: For if we live well here, and there be really an eternal Life, it will be happy for us that we have made this Preparation for it; but if there ſhould indeed be no other Life after this, we ſhall be then no Loſers by what we have done; we ſhall be then

in as good a Condition as others will be in, who did not believe it, nor live in Expectation of it; and all that Trouble which the Exercise of Piety and Virtue now cost us, is not worth speaking of; it is no more than we ought, in Reason and Prudence, to be at; altho', at the same time, we believed it to be very uncertain, whether there would be any such eternal Life, or no.

Besides, Virtue has its natural Rewards; it giveth Peace and Satisfaction to the Mind, governs our Appetites and Passions, that they cause no Pain or Disturbance to us; it is the best Means to preserve our Health, to increase our Fortune, to procure Friends, to reconcile Enemies, to give us Credit and Reputation, to escape the Injuries of bad Men, to pass through the World with as little Envy, and Opposition, and Justling, as it is possible; that is, it is not of itself sufficient to make a good Man happy in this World, for there is no such Thing to be had here; but it is the only Thing that can make him as happy as he can be here; it will prevent a great many Mischiefs, which other Men fall into, and enable him to bear those patiently which it cannot prevent.

Nothing is more plain, nothing less called in question, than that Principle, That we ought never to prefer either a smaller Good before a greater, or a greater Evil before a smaller: Nevertheless Christian Prudence consists almost in nothing else but the Observation of it; for what Failings could we be guilty of, if we did always prefer the Creator before the Creature, Heaven before the Earth, the spiritual Good before the temporal, and what is profitable to our Salvation, before what is profitable for any thing else? How come we to commit Sin, but because, by the greatest of Errors, we fancy that there are greater

greater Evils than Wickedneſs, and more ſolid Goods than Piety?

To juſtify, abundantly, the Choice of thoſe, who, for the infinite and eternal Goods of the Life to come, ſacrifice their Share of the frail and tranſitory Goods of this World; we are but to conſider, that the moſt important Affairs and Concerns of this Life are grounded only upon moral Demonſtrations: Men daily hazard their Lives and Fortunes upon moral Certainties, as thoſe do, who having never been in the *Indies*, in *Turky*, or *Spain*, venture their Eſtates, by undertaking to trade in thoſe Parts, though they have no mathematical Demonſtrations that there are ſuch Countries; and what is more, we eat and drink every Day, tho' none of us can demonſtrate by *Euclides* or *Apollonius*, that his Baker, his Brewer, or his Cook, hath mix'd no Poiſon in his Bread, his Drink, and his Meat: Why ſhould not the ſame Aſſurance do concerning a great Good, as well as concerning one of little Value; when we are to eſchew a great Evil, as well as when we are to avoid one that is much leſs? There can be no Reaſon given for that, unleſs we ſay, that the Hugeneſs of a Peril ought to drive us headlong into it, and the Greatneſs of ſome Good ought to hinder us from ſeeking after it.

We go out of the Way, when we do not go to God, whitherſoever elſe we go, and by what Way ſoever we go: In the World it proves lucky ſometimes to miſs our Aim; perhaps we had taken a wrong Way, or elſe we find in our Way ſomething better than what we look'd for; but, if we find every thing elſe, and we loſe God, we can be but miſerable.

We ought to prefer God not only before ſome Things, but before every Thing.

To determine the Mind to follow Religion with Advantage, 'tis not enough to conſider that we have all to hope, and nothing to fear, tho' we ſhould be deceived in our Belief of a God; and, that all is to be feared, and nothing to be hoped for, in giving ourſelves up to all Licentiouſneſs: God will not be followed only at venture, and at random; a Doubt, and a Perhaps is criminal; Knowledge and Perſuaſion is required.

He that weighs of how much more Moment it is to pleaſe God, who is able eternally to reward us, than Man, whoſe Applauſe can never do us any Good, will ſurely think it reaſonable to make the former his only Care; therefore, not that which is approved of Men now, but what ſhall finally be approved by God, is true Wiſdom.

That which, upon the whole Matter, and in the laſt Iſſue and Reſult of Things, is moſt for our Good, is certainly beſt, how grievous ſoever it may ſeem for the preſent.

There is a vulgar Prejudice againſt Holineſs, as if it were a poor mean Thing, and below a great and generous Spirit; whereas it is the only true Greatneſs of Mind.

'Tis an excellent ſaying of *Cato*, reported in *A. Gellius*: Conſider (ſaith he) with yourſelves, if you be at any Trouble and Pain, to do a good Action, the Trouble will be ſoon over; but the Pleaſure and Comfort of what you have done, well abideth with you all your Days; but if, to gratify yourſelves, you do any thing that is wicked, the Pleaſure will quickly vaniſh, but the Guilt of it will ſtick by you for ever.

When we reflect upon the ſtrange Unconcernedneſs of Men about their future Condition, we may be tempted to think, either that they do

do not believe they have an immortal Soul in them, or that, if they do, they believe it is impoſſible it ſhould miſcarry.

EVEN in reſpect of this World, and the preſent Life, the Practice of ſome Sins is plainly miſchievous to the temporal Intereſts of Men; others are wholly unprofitable; and thoſe which pretend to bring ſome Benefit and Advantage, will, when all Accounts are caſt up, and all Circumſtances duly weighed and conſidered, be found to do far otherwiſe: Of the firſt Rank are all thoſe Vices which fall under the Cognizance of human Law, as Murder, Theft, Perjury, Sedition, Rebellion, or the like; and thoſe which, tho' the human Laws take no Notice of, or do not ſo ſeverely puniſh, are either a Diſturbance to our Minds, or dangerous to our Health, or ruinous to our Eſtate, or hurtful to our Reputation; or it may be, at once, prejudicial to us in all, or moſt of theſe reſpects; as all irregular Paſſions of Wrath, Malice, Envy, Impatience and Revenge, Intemperance and Luſt: Of the ſecond Rank, is all kind of Prophaneneſs and cuſtomary Swearing: Of the third Rank, are Covetouſneſs and Oppreſſion, Fraud and Falſhood, and Perfidiouſneſs, which, well look'd into, will be found either not to bring the Advantages they pretended to bring, or to be attended with as great, or greater Inconveniencies, than the Advantages they bring; or elſe, that the Practice of the oppoſite Virtues, would be of much greater Advantage to us.

THERE is no ſuch Pleaſure, neither, in any Sin, as can make it a reaſonable Temptation to any Man to venture upon it; thoſe which pretend to bring the greateſt Pleaſure, as Lewdneſs, Intemperance, and Revenge, whatever Pleaſure they may miniſter to the Senſe, they not only bring a great

great deal of Anguiſh and Perplexity to the Mind, but alſo diſeaſe the Body; ſo that the Trouble which they cauſe, does more than contervail the Pleaſure which they bring: If there be any Pleaſure in Revenge, it is ſo flitting, and of ſo ſhort a Continuance, that we know not where to fix it; for there is nothing but Tumult and Rage before the Execution of it; and after it, nothing but Remorſe and Horror.

Let us ſuppoſe, that the Laws of God had been juſt the Reverſe of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under ſevere Penalties, to deal falſely and fraudulently with our Neighbour, to demean ourſelves ungratefully to our beſt Friends and Benefactors, to be drunk every Day, and to purſue ſenſual Pleaſures, to the endangering of our Health and Life; how ſhould we have complained of the Unreaſonableneſs of theſe Laws, and have murmured at the Slavery of ſuch intolerable Impoſitions? And yet, now, that God hath commanded us the contrary Things, every way agreeable to our Reaſon and Intereſt, we are not pleaſed neither: What will content us?

What loud Clamours ſhould we have againſt the Juſtice of the divine Providence, did Men ſuffer half ſo much by Piety and Virtue, as they do in the Service of their Luſt? For what is there that can make any Man miſerable in this World, which is not the natural and neceſſary Effect of ſome Sin or other?

If one riotouſly laviſheth away his Eſtate, and for the ſhort Pleaſure of a few Years, be reduced, with the Prodigal, to extreme Poverty, and to loathſome Impriſonment, all his Life after, would he not be eſteemed to have been beſides himſelf? Yet this is a very tolerable Caſe, in Compariſon of expoſing the Soul to eternal Vengeance

Vengeance for the Pleaſures of Sin, which are but for a Seaſon.

One would be apt to think it a very vain thing to diſſuade Men from being miſerable; to uſe great Vehemency of Argument to hinder a Man from leaping into a Pit, or from running into the Fire; to take great Pains to argue a ſick Man into a Deſire of Health, and to make a Priſoner contented to have his Shackles knocked off. One would think all this were perfectly needleſs; but yet we ſee in Experience, Sin is a Thing of ſo ſtupifying a Nature, as to make Men inſenſible of their Danger, altho' it be ſo near, and ſo terrible.

It is, indeed, a moſt amazing thing to ſee, that that which is the one great important Intereſt of all Men, ſhould, of all other Things, meet with the leaſt Regard.

Are we not wretched Fools to deliberate one Moment, whether Heaven were preferable before all the Pleaſures of Sin; or whether it were more eligible to dwell with Harlots and Drunkards for a Moment, and wallow in their beaſtly Pleaſures, than to enjoy the Society of God, and Saints, and Angels, to all Eternity?

If Men will neglect the Means of their Salvation, and will not repent, and turn to God, notwithſtanding all his moſt loving and compaſſionate Exhortations, and the Death of his own Son for them; if neither Heaven can invite, nor Hell frighten them from their Sins, they muſt thank themſelves only for that Deſtruction which they bring upon themſelves.

To ſin againſt God, is to contemn the greateſt Authority in the World: To contradict the greateſt Holineſs and Purity, to abuſe the greateſt Goodneſs, to provoke Almighty Juſtice to take Vengeance upon thee, is to be diſobedient

to thy Sovereign, and unthankful to thy beſt Benefactor: To act contrary to the greateſt Obligations, againſt thy beſt Reaſon, and trueſt Intereſt, to diſoblige thy kindeſt Friend, and to gratify thy worſt and bittereſt Enemy, it is to diſorder thyſelf, to create perpetual Diſquiet to thy own Mind, to deprive thyſelf of thy greateſt Happineſs, and to draw down upon thyſelf extreme and eternal Miſery: And what do we call great Evil, if this be not?

Sin is a Deviation from the right Way; that is, out of the Way of Reaſon, out of the Way of our natural Appointment, out of the Way of Duty and Obligation, out of the Way of thoſe Means which lead us to Happineſs.

'Tis moſt certain, that Abundance of People give that Preference to the Body above the Soul, which it would be very reaſonable to give to the Soul above the Body: Are we as jealous of the Quality of Children of God, as we are of our Birth in the World? Do we forbear doing any thing unworthy of a Child of God, with the ſame Care we avoid doing that which is not agreeable to the Rank we hold in the World?

Not to believe a God, and another Life, for which there is ſo much Evidence of Reaſon, is great Ignorance and Folly; but 'tis the higheſt Madneſs when a Man does believe theſe Things, to live as if he did not believe them.

Not only a ſtrong Fear, but the mere Suſpicion of great Danger, will reſtrain the moſt vehement Deſires of Nature: What Perſon, tho' inflamed with Thirſt, would drink a Glaſs of cool Liquor, if he ſuſpected that deadly Poiſon were mixed with it? And if Men were perſuaded that Sin is attended with eternal Death, would they drink in Iniquity like Water?

If

If Man did act as he ought, if he did not abuſe his Nature, Pain and Pleaſure would keep him in good Order; as the Laws of Motion, which are inviolable, preſerve the World in that fine Order we ſee it in.

How jealous ſoever we may ſhew ourſelves of Liberty, we are never free; we have ſtill, in ſpite of ourſelves, ſome Maſter we ſerve; if it be not God, 'tis Sin, the World, and the Devil.

Nature, in all ſenſual Enjoyments, deſigns Pleaſure, which may certainly be had within the Limits of Virtue; but Vice raſhly purſues Pleaſure into the Enemies Quarters, and never ſtops till the Sinner be ſurrounded, and ſeized upon by Pain and Torment.

What can be ſaid? If neither Promiſes or Threats, Rewards or Puniſhments, Heaven or Hell, will perſuade Men to forſake their Sins, nothing will.

For the avoiding the impotent Fury of the Creature, to venture on the powerful Wrath of God, renders Men more brutiſh than the Horſe, that, ſtarting at his Shadow, ſprings over a deſperate Precipice.

To do Evil with a good Intention, is to ſhew that we have a very mean Notion of the Wiſdom and Power of God; 'tis to preſuppoſe, that God cannot make Things ſucceed to his Glory, and according to his Will, unleſs our Crimes come to help him: But we may be ſure God never needs the Sins of Men, and can never approve them, whatever good Ends they are intended to ſerve; God, indeed, does many times bring Good out of Evil; but he allows no Man to do Evil, that Good may come.

When our Underſtanding miſleads our Will, it is Weakneſs; but when the Will miſleads the Underſtanding, it is Wickedneſs.

He

He that will not conſider, becauſe he will ſin, and afterwards extenuate his Sin by his Inconſideration, urges one Sin in Excuſe for another, and makes that which is his Fault his Apology.

Sinners muſt not excuſe themſelves by the ſtrong Biaſs of their Conſtitution; if it yields to thoſe Reaſons a Man hath, to do nothing unſeemly before his Prince, and if it be ſtopp'd, with all their Paſſions, when they find themſelves in ſome Danger, or when they expect Sentence of Death, it ought to be ſo by the Preſence, Will, and future Judgment of God.

Every body owns there is a great Difference between affronting one before his Face, and affronting him behind his Back: Now, as we can offend God but in his Sight, 'tis certain we cannot offend him without that moſt aggravating Circumſtance.

The Heathens, which are blind from their Birth, and have only ſome glimmering Apprehenſions, that Eternity ſucceeds Time, are leſs culpable than thoſe who have infinitely more Reaſon to believe it, and yet believe it leſs; the Plea for them will be a terrible Accuſation againſt ſuch Unbelievers: If a blind Perſon fall, it moveth Compaſſion; but if one voluntarily ſhuts his Eyes againſt the Sun, and refuſeth the Direction of the Light, and falls from a Precipice, his Ruin is the juſt Conſequence of his Folly.

CHAP.

CHAP. LII.

Concerning the great Corruption of CHRISTIANS.

IF one of the Apoſtles, or primitive Chriſtians, ſhould riſe from the Dead, and converſe among us, how would he wonder to ſee the Face and Complexion of Chriſtianity altered from what it was in their Days! And were it not for the Name and Title which we bear, would ſooner gueſs us to be any thing than Chriſtians: For ſo univerſal a Depravation is there among us, that we have ſcarce any thing left to diſtinguiſh us from the moſt barbarous People, but a better Name, and worſe Vices.

How infinite are the Numbers of ignorant Souls, whoſe Religion is not ſo much their Choice, as their Fate, or their Inheritance; and of whoſe Principles no other Account can be given, than that, being born in a Country, and deſcending from Anceſtors, which had theſe in Veneration, they likewiſe receive them, leſt they ſhould degenerate from their Families; and ſtick to them out of a falſe Modeſty, which fears the being thought ſingular, or affecting to be wiſer than their Neighbours or Forefathers! They would be, after the ſame Manner, *Jews* or *Pagans*, if they had been born in a *Jewiſh* or a *Heathen* Country.

THE Want of catechizing leaves People ſo unbottom'd, that, like a Houſe built on the Sand,

Sand, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profeſs, but underſtand not.

'Tis true, People do not poſitively reject the Truths of the Goſpel; but their Perſuaſion of them is ſo weak, ſo light, and ſo wavering, the Mind is ſo very little affected with them, they are contented with ſo general and ſo confuſed Notions, without deſcending into the Particulars contained therein; in a Word, they ſo little examine and conſider them, that it is near the ſame thing as if they did not believe them at all.

Few Men examine the Grounds of Things, and fewer do it to any Purpoſe; moſt Men follow as they are led, without any further Care or Thought, and die in the Religion in which they were brought up, without much troubling themſelves whether it be true or falſe; but taking all upon Truſt: If they happen to be in the Right, it is by Chance, and more than they know, or are able to prove; if they be in the wrong, they know as little of it; but, right or wrong, they follow the Example of others of whom they have conceived a favourable Opinion, or who have ſome Authority with them to influence them: They profeſs their Religion, as they practiſe other Things, for no better Reaſon, but becauſe they ſee others have done it before them; and they ſtand up for it, only as they do for all Cuſtoms which by long Uſe are become familiar, and almoſt natural to them, but may be worn out by a different Practice and Cuſtom.

Christians conſecrate to God, and to the Church, what they put the leaſt value upon, ſome Men they would not think worthy of any Employment of the leaſt Moment in civil Society.

Some

Some Men would be glad to be ſure of Heaven, but yet would go as near Hell as they can, without Danger of falling into it: They will ſerve God, but muſt reſerve a little Favour and Indulgence to their Luſts; tho' they dare not take full Draughts of ſenſual Pleaſures, yet they muſt be ſipping now and then.

For a Steward to embezzle thoſe Goods he undertakes to manage; an Ambaſſador to betray his Prince, for whom he ſhould negociate; a Shepherd to worry that Flock which he is ſet to guard; theſe are Crimes that double their Malignity from the Quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all thoſe, who, their Devotion having devoted them to the Church, have impiouſly changed the Scene, and devoted the Church to them, ſerved all their mean degenerous Ends upon her.

CHAP. LIII.

Concerning Heresies *and* Schism.

The Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion are not all of the ſame Weight and Moment, ſo as to preclude us from all Hopes of Salvation, if we ſhould be either ignorant of, or not rightly underſtand them.

Those who determine that all Errors are Fundamental, muſt either ſay that they err in no one Doctrine, no not in the leaſt Punctilio, which is the Height of Arrogance, and making themſelves more than Men; or if, ſince they are but Men, they own themſelves to be ſubject to the com-

mon Infirmities of Mankind, they, in their own Judgment, exclude themselves from the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Church in the Beginning consisted of *Jews* and *Heathens*: These People, when they embraced Christianity, did not so divest themselves of their Prejudices and Customs, as not to bring in with them into the Church some of the *Jewish*, and even *Heathenish* Opinions; 'tis very well known, that from thence sprung up those Heresies, by which the Purity of the Doctrine and Morals was corrupted, and several Disorders introduced in the Apostles Time.

The greatest Heresy in the World is a wicked Life, because it is directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole Design of the Christian Faith and Religion; and God will sooner forgive a Man a hundred Defects of his Understanding, than one Fault of his Will: A Christian does not pretend to have a better Wit, or a more piercing Understanding, than a *Turk* or *Heathen*; but he professeth to live better than they, to be more chaste, more temperate, more just, and more charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable, than other Men. If any Man profess himself a Christian, and do not live better than others, he is a mere Pretender and Mountebank in Religion; he is a Bungler in his own Art, and unskilled in his Profession.

'Tis not necessary that all Men should be of the same Mind, in order to render their Faith one and the same; but only that they should agree in the fundamental Articles of Faith.

What by public Consent and Authority is determined, ought not to be gainsaid by private Persons, but upon very clear Evidence of the Falshood or Unlawfulness of it; and this is every Man's Duty for the maintaining of Order,

and out of Regard to the Peace and Unity of the Church, which is not to be violated upon every Scruple, and frivolous Pretence.

When it once comes to this, that a Church is infected with groſs Errors and Corruptions plainly contrary to the Word of God, eſpecially if that Church will impoſe her Errors upon all that are of her Communion; then thoſe who refuſe to comply, do not ſeparate themſelves, but are cut off; do not depart, but are driven out of the Communion of that Church; and ſeparation in that Caſe is as innocent, and free from the Guilt of Schiſm, as the Cauſe of it is.

It is not denied by the moſt judicious Proteſtants, but that the Church of *Rome* do hold all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith which are neceſſary to Salvation; but that which we charge upon them as a juſt Ground of our Separation from them, is the impoſing of new Doctrines and Practices upon Chriſtians as neceſſary to Salvation, which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apoſtles; and which are either directly contrary to the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, or too apparently deſtructive of a good Life.

CHAP. LIV.

Concerning Idolatry *and* Superſtition.

TO the End that any Worſhip ſhould terminate to God, it muſt be ordered and accepted by God: No Worſhip can terminate to God in ſpite of him; ſo 'tis moſt certain that all Superſtition is a kind of Idolatry: The Superſtitious

ſtitious may ſay, That their Intention is to worſhip the true God: The Deity which rejects and refuſes that falſe Worſhip, hinders it from terminating to it; in the mean time Worſhip muſt terminate to ſomething; and the ſuperſtitious Worſhip not terminating to the true God, nor to any known Idol, it remains, that it muſt terminate to the preſumptuous Imaginations of the Superſtitious; and 'tis properly that Vanity of his Imagination which is his Idol.

If any private Man ſhould bethink himſelf of being let Blood, of being dreſt after ſome particular Way, or of abſtaining from ſome Sorts of Meats, to ſhew his Zeal and Reſpect for his King, he would be laugh'd at, and that deſervedly, becauſe in Reality theſe Actions being not natural Signs of the Zeal and Reſpect of a Subject for his Prince, and the Prince having never declared, that he will take them as outward Demonſtrations of the inward Sentiments People have for him, the Will of that Man who would do them with that Intention, would not be ſufficient to make them ſo. The ſame thing muſt be ſaid of all that the Church of *Rome* doth to ſhew its Zeal for the Glory and Service of God: The Abſtinences, and other Obſervances recommended by it, are in their Nature Actions indifferent, 'tis true; the Intention ſhe performs them with is good, I will own: But as theſe Obſervances neither in themſelves, or by God's Inſtitution, are any ways profitable, or of any Efficacy to pleaſe him, and get his Love, 'tis quite needleſs to perform them.

The Church of *Rome* apprehends that the Subſtance under the Accidents, and which naturally was Bread, is Jeſus Chriſt; that is the Conſequence of the Opinion of Tranſubſtantiation: Afterwards, by virtue of that Opinion, ſhe

ſhe worſhips that Subſtance, thinking it is Jeſus Chriſt: The Queſtion is, Whether, even upon Suppoſition of her being miſtaken in her Opinion, and of that Subſtance being ſtill really Bread, whether, I ſay, her Notion ſhelters her from the Crime of Idolatry? If the Fancy of thoſe who are miſtaken in an Object, could excuſe their Actions committed by reaſon of that Miſtake, there had never been any Idolaters in the World: For thoſe who adored the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, Animals, *&c.* did it only becauſe they fancied them to be true Deities; and it was only by reaſon of that Error they adored them, having had at the Bottom no other Intention but to worſhip Deities.

As in the true Adoration and Worſhipping of God, the external Geſture of the Body is not ſufficient, but the inward Reverence of the Mind is likewiſe requiſite, ſince God cannot be worſhipped by the Body alone: So for the committing of Idolatry, 'tis enough if the outward Signs of Adoration be performed, tho' the Mind may deride and deteſt them; becauſe, if not in the Mind, yet in Fact the Idol is worſhipped as if it were a God.

SUPERSTITION is too great a Fear of God, whereby 'tis ſuppoſed that he is offended at thoſe Things with which he is not at all diſpleaſed.

IF Ignorance do beget and promote ſome kind of Devotion in Men, it is ſuch a Devotion as is not properly Religion, but Superſtition.

CHAP. LV.

Concerning CEREMONIES.

WHEN God makes a Covenant with Men, he conſiders them as Men; that is, he appoints ſuch Solemnities of it as have reſpect to the Body, as well as to the Soul; he does not deal with us as with immaterial Spirits, but as with Creatures conſiſting of Soul and Body, and who little regard, and are little affected with, that which does not ſome way concern the one as well as the other.

ALL outward Circumſtances or Ceremonies (excepting thoſe of the two Sacraments) which are poſitive, are left by the Goſpel to as great a Liberty as natural Neceſſity and Decency will permit.

THOSE who ſpend the Strength and Vigour of their Spirits about external Things, whoſe Zeal for, or againſt Ceremonies, is ready to eat them up, and break the neceſſary and indiſpenſable Commands of Love, as an indifferent and unneceſſary Ceremony, let them go and learn what that means, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*; and that *Rom.* xiv. 17. *The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink*, &c. and ſtudy the Meaning of this; *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.*

'TIS the Duty of every Man to reſt ſatisfied in that Form of Church Government which is by

by common Consent receiv'd in the Church wherein he liveth; and never to raise Commotions, or rend the Church into Schism upon the Account of external Order, provided it does not degenerate into Tyranny, nor lay any Force upon Mens Consciences, or destroy the Christian Liberty.

CHAP. LVI.

Concerning the CHURCH *in general, and in particular against the* Infallibility *of that of* Rome.

THE Church of Jesus Christ is a Congregation or Society of Men, called by the preaching of the Gospel to Faith in Jesus Christ, and to Holiness of Life, and who obey the divine Call upon the Hopes of obtaining eternal Happiness.

THE Church ceases to be a Church, when it errs in Things necessary, but not when it only errs in Things not necessary.

FOR the obtaining of Union and Peace amongst separate Churches; 1*st*, All Decisions by which Doctrines not clearly expressed in Scripture, are determined to be necessary, must be abrogated, or at least not urged as Decrees which every Man is obliged to stand to; 2*dly*, No Forms of Expression ought to be urged as necessary, which are not contained in sacred Writ, under what Pretence soever invented; for this is an Affront

to the Holy Ghoſt, and an Injury offered to Liberty of Conſcience. 3*dly*, We muſt return to that ancient Simplicity which prevailed in the Primitive Church; for then there were not ſo many Articles required to be believed, as there are at preſent, but only Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, as is evident from the Anſwer *Peter* made to our Saviour, *Matth.* xvi. 16, 17. the *Eunuch* to *Philip*, *Acts* viii. 37. and the Qualifications which *Paul* and *Silas* required of the converted Jailor.

Tho' in a Church already eſtabliſhed, ſome Miſſion or Ordination be neceſſary for the avoiding of Confuſion, yet 'tis not abſolutely neceſſary for any one lawfully to preach the Goſpel among Infidels; ſince 'tis enough if he be thoroughly acquainted with the Knowledge of the Goſpel, and touched with an earneſt Deſire after the Salvation of others.

It does not appear that the Church ought to be denied what is not diſputed to the leaſt of Societies; therefore it has been in its Power to eſtabliſh a Diſcipline to which all her Members ſhould ſubmit; provided that on the one Hand the publick Tranquility and the civil Power be not prejudic'd by that Diſcipline, and that on the other it be no ways contrary to the Laws of the Goſpel: But this is not all, Diſcipline is an Order; whoſe Author is God; we find the Inſtitution of it in the Holy Scripture, and in the Laws of Jeſus Chriſt, and of his Apoſtles; ſee *Matth.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. 1 *Cor.* v. 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 13. 2 *Theſ.* iii. 6. 1 *Timoth.* v. &c.

In the Church, as well as in the Civil Government, there will always be ſome Inconveniency to be feared; 'tis an almoſt unavoidable Evil, there being no Form of Government but what Men may abuſe; but theſe Abuſes are much leſs

leſs evil than Anarchy, which is of all States the moſt dangerous.

Ecclesiastical Diſcipline, as ſuch, is not any external Juriſdiction properly ſo called, the Church being deprived of that; but a ſerious Denunciation made to a Sinner, that he for his obſtinate Perſeverance in Sin, and the Works of the Fleſh, is, according to the Rules of the Goſpel, guilty of eternal Damnation; and that conſequently it is not lawful for her to hold any Communion with him as a Brother, ſo long as he remains impenitent, that by this Means being convinced of his Sins, he may be brought to Repentance.

The true Uſe of the Miniſtry of the Church, is not to have a ſovereign Power and Dominion over the Faith and Conſciences, but to help the Faithful, by imparting to them that Knowledge, which by themſelves they could not have: Paſtors are as ſo many Guides appointed to ſhew to every one the right Way which he ought to follow, leaving them at the ſame time the Liberty to diſtinguiſh by themſelves the right Way from the wrong; they have more Knowledge and Skill in Matters of Religion, than the ſimple Believers; from whence it follows, that they may propoſe to the People ſome Things drawn from Scripture, and make them take Notice of them, which they had not found out themſelves; but that does not hinder, but that every one has the Right and Power, and is under an Obligation to diſcern what is propoſed to them, and to perceive either its Truth and Solidity, or its Vanity and Falſity; beſides, Paſtors are appointed to ſave the People's Time by working for them, and offering them at once ſeveral great and noble Meditations, ſeveral important Doctrines, Precepts, and Exhortations, which the People could not

not have gathered of themſelves, but by a long Series of Days or Years.

When our Saviour promiſeth, that the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt his Church, by the Word Hell, or ἅδης, is not to be underſtood the Devil, who is never denoted by that Word; but his Meaning is, that Death ſhall not ſo far prevail over the true Believers, who properly conſtitute his Church, as to keep them under its Power for ever, but that they ſhall be raiſed again at the laſt Day, from Death to Life everlaſting.

We muſt not always argue about the Chriſtian Religion, from what was practiſed in the *Jewiſh*; among the *Jews*, the Religion and the Civil State were intermix'd, and in a Manner confounded; that Society, merely ſpiritual, which is called Church, and is not knit to any State, to any Nation, or any Form of Government, was not properly fram'd but ſince the Coming of our Saviour.

The true Church does not make and conſtitute the true Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine, but it is the Profeſſion of the true Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine makes the true Church.

Antiquity is not always a certain Mark of the true Religion; for ſurely there was a Time when Chriſtianity began, and was a new Profeſſion, and then both *Judaiſm* and *Paganiſm* had certainly the Advantage of it in point of Antiquity; but the proper Queſtion between the Proteſtants and the Church of *Rome*, is, Which is the true ancient Chriſtian Faith, hers or their's? And the Caſe is plainly this, The Proteſtants believe and teach all that is contained in the Creeds of the ancient Chriſtian Church, and was by them eſteemed neceſſary to Salvation, and this is their Religion; but now the Church of *Rome* hath innovated

novated in the Christian Religion, and made several Additions to it, and greatly corrupted it both in the Doctrines and Practices of it, and these Additions and Corruptions are their Religion, as it is distinct from ours; and both because they are Corruptions and Novelties, we have rejected them, and our Rejection of these is our Reformation; and our Reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be so ancient as their Corruptions, all Reformation necessarily supposing Corruptions and Errors to have been before it; and now we may easily answer that captious Question of theirs, Where was your Religion before *Luther?* Where-ever Christianity was, in some Places more pure, in others more corrupted with manifold Errors, which the Reformation hath happily cut off and cast away: So that, tho' our Reformation was as late as *Luther*, our Religion is as ancient as Christianity itself; if they will still complain of the Newness of our Reformation, so do we too, and are heartily sorry it began no sooner; but however, better late than never; besides, this Objection of Novelty lieth against all Reformation whatsoever.

The Church of *Rome* itself owns the Authority we rely on to be infallible, but all Christians all the World over, besides those of her own Communion, disallow hers to be so; and to forsake our Dependence upon an Infallibility which all own, to rely upon an Infallibility which but few in Comparison admit, is certainly a very dangerous Venture.

To believe that there is a Church, because the Church saith there is a Church, is to take that for granted which is the Thing in Question; and to believe that there is a Church that has Authority to propose to us the Articles of our Faith, is to believe that there is a Church which we are

obliged

obliged to believe; and how can I believe this upon the Church's Authority, unleſs I can believe it before I do believe it? That this Church is infallible, is not to be believed upon her own Authority, for then her infallible Authority muſt be the Reaſon of our Belief that ſhe is infallible; that is, we muſt believe her infallible, becauſe we believe her infallible; therefore all theſe Things we muſt believe upon the Authority of Scripture, but we cannot reaſonably rely upon the Authority of any Church.

If upon Scripture Authority I may be certain that the Church of *Rome* is the infallible Church, why may I not as well be infallibly certain upon the ſame Authority of other Principles of Chriſtianity as well as thoſe; ſeeing there are no common Principles of Chriſtian Religion, but what are at leaſt as plainly revealed in Scripture as theſe?

Is there any Senſe to ſay, that a Man ſhould be very fit and able to judge of that which they eſteem the main and fundamental Point of all; namely, which is the true Religion; and of the Reaſons and Arguments whereby they pretend to demonſtrate it; and of the true Meaning of thoſe Texts of Scripture, whereby they pretend to prove theirs to be the only true Church; and yet ſhould be wholly unable to judge of particular Points of Faith, or of the true Senſe of any Texts of Scripture, that can be produced for the Proof of theſe Points?

For thoſe of the Church of *Rome* to pretend to prove the Infallibility of their Church by Scripture, and at the ſame Time to declare, that which are the true Books of Scripture, and what is the true Senſe of them, can only be proved by the infallible Authority of their Church, is a plain and ſhameful Circle.

Those of the Church of *Rome* are very stiff and peremptory in their Doctrine of Infallibility, tho' they are not agreed among themselves where this Infallibility is seated, whether in the Pope alone, or a Council alone, or in both together, or in the diffusive Body of Christians; but they are sure they have it, tho' they do not know where it is; nothing could have fallen more unluckily, than that there should be such Differences among them, about that which they pretend to be the only Means of ending all Differences.

There are two Controversies actually on Foot about an infallible Judge; one, Whether there be an infallible Judge or not, which is a Controversy between the Protestants and the Church of *Rome*; and the other, Who this infallible Judge is; which is a Controversy among themselves, which could never yet be decided; and yet, till it be decided, Infallibility, if they had it, would be of no Use to them for the ending of Controversies.

What greater Certainty have those of the Church of *Rome*, with their Infallibility, than we without it? We can know as well the Sense of plain Texts of Scripture, as of plain Texts of Councils, or Creeds, or Catechisms, and we can as easily pervert the Sense of the one as of the other: So that, when all comes to all, by forsaking the infallible Authority of Scripture to rely upon the infallible Authority of that Church, we are so far from arriving at a greater Certainty of Faith, that we are involv'd in greater Uncertainties than ever; for do not the *Roman* Doctors differ as much about the Sense of their Councils, as we do about the Sense of our Scriptures? Yea and have we not a notorious Instance of it at this very Day? For what can be more contrary than

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Bellarmine's Expoſition of the *Trent* Faith, and the Biſhop of *Condom's*, and yet both allowed by the Pope; who by the Authority of that Council, is made ſole Arbitrator of the Senſe of it.

THERE is no ſuch abſolute Need, as is pretended, of determining all Controverſies in Religion: If Men would diveſt themſelves of Prejudice and Intereſt as they ought, in Matters of Religion, the neceſſary Things of Religion are plain enough, and Men would generally agree well enough about them; but if Men will ſuffer themſelves to be byaſſed by theſe, they would not hearken to an infallible Judge, if there were one; or they would find out ſome way or other to call his Infallibility into Queſtion; and as for doubtful and leſſer Matters of Religion, Charity and mutual Forbearance among Chriſtians would make the Church as peaceable and happy as perhaps it was ever deſigned to be in this World, without abſolute Unity in Opinion.

THE preſent Condition of human Nature does not admit of any Conſtitution of Things, whether in Religion or civil Matters, which is free from all kind of Exception and Inconvenience; that is the beſt State of Things, which is liable to the leaſt and feweſt: If Men be modeſt, and humble, and willing to learn, God hath done that which is ſufficient for the Aſſurance of our Faith, without an infallible Judge; and if Men will not be ſo, I cannot tell what would be ſufficient: I am ſure, there were Hereſies and Schiſms in the Apoſtles Time, when thoſe who govern'd the Church were certainly guided by an infallible Spirit.

GOD has made no effectual and infallible Proviſion that Men ſhall not ſin; and yet it would puzzle any Man to give a good Reaſon, why he ſhould take more Care to ſecure Men againſt Errors

Errors in Belief, than against Sin and Wickedneſs in their Lives.

If the *Roman-catholick*, that is, a particular univerſal Church, be a groſs and palpable Contradiction; then it is plain, that the Church of *Rome* hath no more Pretence to the Privilege of never quite falling off from the Truth, belonging only to the whole Church in general, than any other particular Church whatſoever.

Christ hath promiſed to preſerve his Church to the End of the World; that is, he has engaged his Word, that he will take Care that there ſhall always be, in ſome Part of the World or other, ſome Perſons that ſhall make a ſincere Profeſſion of his true Religion.

'Tis evident that many Popes have erred, and fallen into Hereſy; nor can the Papiſts themſelves deny it, for one there was; *viz.* Pope *John* XXIII. who denied a future State, and the Reſurrection of the Fleſh.

If particular Synods, by the Confeſſion of the *Romaniſts* themſelves, are fallible, the ſame may be ſaid of general ones, which differ from the others in Number only.

Synods have no other Authority but that of Perſuading; which is founded not upon the Infallibility of the Synod, but on the clear Arguments of Reaſon and Scripture: Hence it is, that the Decrees of Synods cannot be Deciſions of Controverſies, nor Rules of Faith; but only the Declarations of thoſe who compoſe the Synod, teſtifying their Faith and Opinion about ſome controverted Point, without authoritatively preſcribing to others, what they ought to believe about it.

The Reſpect due to the Councils, is, that we ought rather to ſuſpect our own private Judgments,

ments, than without very apparent Reaſon to conclude their Determinations falſe.

In Things lawful and indifferent we are bound by the Rules of Decency and Civility, not to thwart the general Practice, and by the Commands of God we are certainly obliged to obey the Commands of lawful Authority; but in Things plainly contrary to the Evidence of Senſe and Reaſon, or to the Word of God, a Man would compliment no Man, or Number of Men; becauſe, in ſuch a Caſe, a Man does not oppoſe his own ſingle and private Judgment to the Judgment of many, but the common Reaſon of Mankind, and the Judgment of God plainly declared in his Word.

All Doctrines are vehemently to be ſuſpected, which decline Trial.

It is impoſſible for any Man to receive two Revelations as from God, without Liberty to examine whether they be agreeable to, and conſiſtent with one another: And it were a hard Caſe, that a Neceſſity of believing divine Revelations, and rejecting Impoſtures, ſhould be impoſed upon Chriſtians: And yet the Liberty of Judging, whether a Doctrine be from God or not, ſhould be taken away from them.

God's Goodneſs is ſuch, that he will not ſuffer any Man's Judgment to be betrayed into a damnable Error, without ſome Vice and Fault of his Will.

It is every Man's Duty, who hath Ability and Capacity for it, to endeavour to underſtand the Grounds of his Religion, to be the more firmly eſtabliſhed in the Truth, againſt all the Arts and Aſſaults of cunning Adverſaries, and the fierce Storm of Perſecution.

Bellarmine ſaith, That if the Pope ſhould determine Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue,

Virtue, we were bound to believe him, unleſs we would ſin againſt Conſcience; which how it agrees with what St. *Paul* ſaith, *Galat.* i. 8. any one may judge.

If it be really a Preferment to a Prince to hold the Pope's Stirrup, and a Privilege to be depoſed by him at his Pleaſure, and a Courteſy to be killed at his Command; if to pray without Underſtanding, and to obey without Reaſon, and to believe againſt Senſe; if Ignorance, and implicit Faith, and an Inquiſition, be in good Earneſt ſuch charming and deſirable Things, then welcome Popery, which, where-ever thou comeſt, doſt infallibly bring all theſe wonderful Privileges and Bleſſings along with thee.

CHAP. LVII.

Againſt TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

THERE is no more Foundation in Scripture for the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, than for our Saviour's being ſubſtantially changed into all thoſe Things which are ſaid of him, as that he is a Rock, a Vine, a Door, and a hundred other Things; ſo that thoſe Forms of Speech, *I am the true Vine*, *I am the Door*, do as ſubſtantially prove, that Chriſt bears Grapes, and turns upon Hinges, as theſe, *This is my Body*, do the Truth of Tranſubſtantiation, and of all thoſe Abſurdities it contains.

THERE is not in the *Hebrew* Language a more proper and uſual Way of expreſſing a Thing to

ſignify ſo and ſo, than to ſay, that it *is* ſo and ſo; and nothing is more common in all Languages, than to give the Name of the Thing ſignified to the Sign: Beſides, if we conſider that our Saviour celebrated the Sacrament before his Paſſion, it is impoſſible, theſe Words, *This is my Body, which is broken, and this is my Blood which is ſhed*, ſhould be underſtood literally, of the natural Body and Blood of Chriſt, becauſe his Body was then whole and unbroken, and his Blood was not then ſhed; and it is likewiſe impoſſible, that the Diſciples ſhould underſtand theſe Words literally; if they did, can we imagine that they, who upon all other Occaſions were ſo full of Queſtions and Objections, ſhould make no Difficulty of this Matter; and tell him, We ſee this to be Bread, and that to be Wine, and we ſee thy Body to be diſtinct from both; we ſee thy Body not broken, and thy Blood not ſhed?

As the natural Senſe of theſe Words, *The ſeven Ears are ſeven Years*, is the figurative Senſe, becauſe the Queſtion is about the Images of a Dream; and the natural Senſe of thoſe Terms, *The Seed is the Word*, is a parabolical Senſe, becauſe the Buſineſs in Hand is a Parable: So likewiſe, the natural Senſe of theſe Words, *This is my Body*, ſaid of the Bread, which Jeſus Chriſt held in his Hands, is the ſacramental Senſe, becauſe the Matter is concerning a Sacrament.

Those Expreſſions, *I am the true Vine, I am the true Bread*, come to this Senſe; I am very well repreſented under the Image of a Vine, I am very well expreſs'd by the Image of Bread: Whether we take in a proper Senſe what was ſaid in a figurative Senſe, or in a figurative Senſe what was ſaid in a proper Senſe; we do alike depart from the true Meaning of him that ſpeaks.

It is no leſs abſurd to pretend to feed the Soul, and to convey into it a ſpiritual Meat by an oral Manducation, than it would be to pretend to feed the Body, and convey into it a corporal Meat by a Manducation made by the Soul.

If the Teſtimony of Senſe be to be relied upon, then Tranſubſtantiation is falſe; if it be not, then no Man is ſure that Chriſtianity is true.

I can never, while I live, believe theſe two Things; that the laſt Thing our Saviour did before his Death, ſhould be to teach his Diſciples not to believe their own Senſes, as he muſt do, if he taught them Tranſubſtantiation; and that the very firſt Thing he did after he was riſen from the Dead, ſhould be to teach them the quite contrary, by appealing to the Certainty of Senſe, for the Proof of his Reſurrection.

Transubstantiation is not to be proved by a Miracle; for that would be to prove to a Man, by ſomething that he ſeeth, that he does not ſee what he ſeeth.

None of the Miracles that God hath ſhewn, or Belief which he has required to any thing that he hath revealed, has ever contradicted the outward Senſes of any one Man in the World, much leſs of all Mankind together; for Miracles being Appeals to our outward Senſes, if they ſhould overthrow the Certainty of our outward Senſes, muſt deſtroy with it all their own Certainty as to us; ſince we have no other way to judge of a Miracle exhibited to our Senſes, than upon the Supoſition of the Certainty of our Senſes, upon which we give Credit to a Miracle that is ſhewn to our Senſes; and this ſhews how exceedingly ſhort, and out of Purpoſe, the Compariſon between the Doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation, and that of Tranſubſtantiation, is: For I would ask, Which of our Senſes it is, which the

Doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation do contradict? Is it our Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, Taſte, or Smell? whereas Tranſubſtantiation doth contradict all theſe.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION, if thoſe of the Church of *Rome* will needs have it a Miracle, is ſuch a Miracle as any Man may work, that hath but the Confidence to face Men down that he works it, and the Fortune to be believed; for when this great Work, as they call it, is done, there is nothing more appears to be done, than if there were no Miracle: Surely nothing in the World is eaſier, than to let a Thing be as it is; and by ſpeaking a few Words over it, to make it juſt what it was before; every Man, every Day, may work ten thouſand ſuch Miracles.

THE new Way of breaking a Body, not into Parts, but into Wholes, (which, in good Earneſt, is the Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*) tho' to them that are able to believe Tranſubſtantiation, it may, for any thing I know, appear to be ſound Senſe; yet to us, that cannot believe ſo, it appears to be ſolid Nonſenſe.

'THO' in caſe of divine Revelation, I may believe that to be no Contradiction, which ſeems to me to be a Contradiction; yet I am not, without Neceſſity and clear Evidence, to offer Violence to Reaſon, and affront the Faculty of Underſtanding which God hath endowed me withal, by entertaining any thing which ſeems to me to be a Contradiction; which the Papiſts do in the Buſineſs of Tranſubſtantiation, without any Evidence of Revelation, and conſequently without Neceſſity.

CREDULITY is certainly a Fault as well as Infidelity; and he who ſaid, *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed*, hath nowhere

where ſaid, Bleſſed are they that believe directly contrary to what they ſee.

That very Argument by which our Saviour proves the Reality of his Body after his Reſurrection, does as ſtrongly prove the Reality of Bread and Wine after Conſecration; but our Saviour's Argument was moſt infallibly good and true, and therefore the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation is undoubtedly falſe.

It was great Stupidity in the People of *Iſrael* to ſay, Come, let us make us Gods; but it was civilly ſaid of them, Let us make us Gods that may go before us, in Compariſon of the Church of *Rome*, who ſay, Let us make a God, that we may eat him.

Had the ancient Chriſtians owned any ſuch Doctrine as that of Tranſubſtantiation, we ſhould have heard of it from the Adverſaries of our Religion, in every Page of their Writings.

CHAP. LVIII.

Concerning the Receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The Danger of the unworthy performing this ſo ſacred an Action, is no otherwiſe a Reaſon to any Man to abſtain from the Sacrament, than it is an Argument to him to caſt off all Religion: He that unworthily uſeth and performs any Part of Religion, is in an evil and dangerous Condition; but he that caſts off all Religion, throws off all the Means whereby he

ſhould be reclaimed and brought into a better State: This Matter cannot be more fitly illuſtrated than by this plain Similitude; He that eats and drinks intemperately, endangers his Health and his Life; but he that to avoid this Danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very ſhort Space.

'Tis true, the Danger of unworthy receiving the Sacrament is great; but the proper Inference and Concluſion from thence, is, not that Men ſhould, upon this Conſideration, be deterred from the Sacrament; but that they ſhould be affrighted from their Sins, and from that wicked Courſe of Life, which is an habitual Indiſpoſition and Unworthineſs.

The beſt Preparation for the Sacrament is the general Care and Endeavours of a good Life; and he that is thus prepared, may receive at any time, when Opportunity is offered, tho' he had no particular Foreſight of that Opportunity.

We cannot well conceive how the primitive Chriſtians, who celebrated it ſo conſtantly, could allot any more Time for a ſolemn Preparation for it, than they did for any other Parts of divine Worſhip: However, beſides our habitual Preparation by Repentance, and the conſtant Endeavours of a holy Life, it is a very pious and commendable Cuſtom in Chriſtians, before their coming to the Sacrament, to ſet apart ſome particular Time for this Work of Examination; but how much Time every Perſon ſhould allot to this Purpoſe, is Matter of Prudence, and cannot be preciſely determined: In this, as in all other Actions, the End is principally to be regarded. Now the End of examining ourſelves is to underſtand our State and Condition, and to reform

reform whatever we find amiss in ourselves; and provided this End be obtained, the Circumstances of the Means are less considerable; whether more or less Time be allowed to this Work, it matters not so much as to make sure that the Work be thoroughly done.

'Tis not the Sense of our Unworthiness, that should hinder us from coming to the holy Sacrament, but our Resolution or Unwillingness to be otherwise; and that, indeed, will make us unworthy for ever; for where shall we be washed, if not in this Fountain, which is opened for Sin and Uncleanness?

A Pardon is graciously offered to a Rebel; he declines to accept it, and modestly excuseth himself, because he is not worthy of it: And why is he not worthy? Because he resolves to continue a Rebel, and then his Pardon will do him no Good, but be an Aggravation of his Crime: Very true; and it will be no less an Aggravation, that he refuseth it for such a Reason, and under a Pretence of Modesty, does the most impudent Thing in the World.

It is no Excuse for the Neglect of our Duty, that we will not fit ourselves for the doing of it, with Benefit and Advantage.

If we expect God's Grace and Assistance, we must work out our own Salvation in the careful Use of all those Means which God has appointed to that End; that excellent Degree of Goodness which Men would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the Use of it; and therefore it is a preposterous thing for Men to insist upon having the End, before they will use the Means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

THERE is a Puniſhment for them who ought to come to the Lord's Supper and come not, as well as for thoſe who come not as they ought.

IF we do in good earneſt believe that this Sacrament was inſtituted by our Lord, in Remembrance of his dying Love, we cannot but have a very high Value and Eſteem for it upon that Account. Methinks ſo often as we read, in the Inſtitution of it, thoſe Words of our dear Lord, *Do this in Remembrance of me*, and conſider what he, who ſaid them, did for us; this dying Charge of our beſt Friend ſhould ſtick with us, and make a ſtrong Impreſſion upon our Minds.

SHOULD our Saviour remember us no oftener than we do his Death and Paſſion, how fearful would our Condition be!

THE oftener we do reſort to the bleſſed Communion, the greater will be our Acquaintance with our beſt of Friends.

'TIS the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt which waſhes us from our Sins, and protects the Soul from all the Darts of divine Juſtice; but we purchaſe that Right by eating his Body, and drinking his Blood.

WE ſee, in the *Euchariſt*, a God crucified for the Sins of Men: How ſhould we not be ſoftened at the Sight of ſo moving an Object? How can we forbear loving a God, whoſe Love for us is ſo great as to die for us?

DO not think that you are come to the holy Table only to receive God's Benefits; you ſolemnly engage yourſelf by an Oath, to be obedient and holy; the Blood of Jeſus, which you receive and drink, is the Seal of your Engagement.

ONE of the Reaſons, which makes many People not to receive the Communion, and live well, is the too rigid Notion which ſome Books give of the

the Communion; they repreſent it as an Action ſo extraordinary, ſo hard, ſo dangerous, that thoſe who read theſe Diſcourſes, are tempted to go away from the holy Table, and deſpair to partake of it as they ought; ſo that inſtead of being filled with Joy at the Time of the Celebration of the *Euchariſt* in the Church, many are under deadly Fears and Anguiſhes of Mind: However, it is not always neceſſary to be affected with Joy when we draw near the Table of the Lord; for it is not in our Power, 'tis an Effect of the Preſence of God, who hides and ſhews himſelf as he pleaſeth.

In the Examination of ourſelves we are commonly guilty of this Fault; we judge of our Hearts by our Actions, inſtead of judging of our Actions by our Hearts; we ought, before all Things, to conſider, whether they be full of Love for God, and whether they be acted by a true Charity.

If in our earthly Affairs we often forget heavenly, good Reaſon it is, that in our heavenly we ſhould much rather forget all earthly: How nimbly do we purſue the Vanities of the World, but pretend a Faintneſs in the Service of God! We can run after the periſhing Concernments of this Life, but make little or no Progreſs in coming to his holy Table.

Certainly there is not in all the whole Myſtery of Godlineſs, in all the Oeconomy of the Goſpel, ſo expedite, ſo infallible a Means of Growth in Grace, as a frequent and worthy Participation of the bleſſed Sacrament.

CHAP.

CHAP. LIX.

Concerning TEMPTATIONS.

HOW powerful ſoever the Temptation be to any kind of Evil, there is always enough of our own Will in it to render us guilty.

THE true Reaſon why Men fall into Sin is not becauſe they are tempted, but becauſe there is ſomething within them, which inclines and diſpoſeth them to comply with the Temptation, and to yield to it.

THE inward Motions of our Souls are totally exempt from the immediate Cognizance of any other Spirit, but God's alone; and neither Angel nor Devil has any further Knowledge of them, than may be collected and inferred in a Way of probable Conjecture, from the particular Knowledge of Mens Tempers, and Habits, and Deſigns, and the Courſe of their Actions.

LET us reſolve, as it is moſt reaſonable we ſhould, never to comply with any ſinful Motion, till we can get more by it than our Souls are worth; and then, I am ſure, we ſhould be for ever deaf to all the Proffers which the Devil or World can make us.

NEVER let your Children be without a Calling; for the Devil tempts the Active and Vigorous into his Service; but the Idle offer themſelves, as it were, to his Service; and having nothing to do, they even tempt the Devil himſelf to tempt them.

CHAP.

CHAP. LX.

Concerning Habitual Sins, *and chiefly of the* Unpardonable Sin.

IT was a good Reply of *Plato*, to one who murmured at his reproving him for a ſmall Matter: Cuſtom, ſaith he, is no ſmall Matter; and, indeed, ſuppoſing any Sin were ſo ſmall, as we are willing to fanſy moſt, yet an indulgent Habit, even of that, would certainly be ruinous; that Indulgence being perfectly oppoſite to the Love of God, which better can conſiſt with the indeliberate Commiſſions of many Sins, than in an avowed Perſiſtance in any one.

SOME make the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt to conſiſt in final Impenitency; others, in a wilful and obſtinate Oppoſition of the Truth; others, in a malicious Oppoſition of it, when Men know, and are convinced, that it is the Truth; others, in a renouncing of the Truth for fear of ſuffering; but none of theſe ſeems to be the Sin our Saviour deſcribes, *Matth.* xii. 31, 32. *Mark* iii. 28, 29, 30.

THE Nature of that Sin did conſiſt in a moſt malicious Oppoſition to the utmoſt Evidence that could be given to the Truth of any Religion; in reſiſting the Evidence of thoſe Miracles, which were ſo plainly wrought by the Holy Ghoſt, and which tho' themſelves ſaw, yet they maliciouſly imputed them to the Devil, rather than they would be convinced by them; and this is ſo very plain, that hardly any Man, that conſiders

ſiders our Saviour's Diſcourſe upon this Occaſion, can otherwiſe determine the Nature of this Sin.

To ſay that our Saviour wrought his Miracles by the Power of the Devil, was ſo exorbitantly unreaſonable and malicious, that he pronounceth it to be an unpardonable Sin; and appeals to every Man's Reaſon, Whether it was likely that the Devil ſhould conſpire againſt himſelf, and aſſiſt any Man to overthrow his own Kingdom; for it was plain, our Saviour's Doctrine was directly contrary to the Devil's Deſign: So the particular Nature of the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt conſiſted in that malicious and unreaſonable imputing of the plain Effects of the Holy Ghoſt, to the Power of the Devil; and, conſequently, in an obſtinate Refuſal to be convinced by the Miracles that he wrought.

THIS Blaſphemy is truly ſaid to be againſt the Holy Ghoſt, (becauſe he is thereby directly affronted, and called an infernal Spirit) in Oppoſition to the Blaſphemy againſt the Son of Man; whereby the Perſon of the Son is properly injured, when he is rejected (conſidered as a mere Man, of a mean and abject Condition) as one that falſely boaſts himſelf the Meſſiah; or, when he is blaſphemed, as being a Glutton and Wine-biber.

THIS Sin is, above all others, incapable of Pardon: *1ſt*, Becauſe by it Men reſiſt their laſt Remedy, and oppoſe the beſt and utmoſt Means of their Converſion, and which God has ever yet thought fit to uſe to bring Men to Repentance and Salvation: *2dly*, Becauſe this Sin is of that high Nature, that God is therefore juſtly provoked to withdraw his Grace from ſuch Perſons, and, it is probable, reſolved ſo to do; without which Grace, they will continue impenitent.

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THAT which cometh neareſt to the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, ſpoken of by our Saviour, both in the Heinouſneſs of the Crime, and the Unpardonableneſs of it, is total Apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity after the embracing of it, and full Conviction of the Truth of it; and of this the Apoſtle ſpeaks very often in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, under the Name of Unbelief and Sin, by way of Eminence; and it is very probable, that the Sin unto Death, of which St. *John* ſpeaks, 1 *Ep.* ch. v. ver. 16. is Apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity to Idolatry; otherwiſe, it is hard to imagine how the laſt Clauſe comes in; *Little Children, keep yourſelves from Idols.*

IT ſeems to be a Contradiction to know any thing to be the Truth, and to believe it to be ſo, and yet to oppoſe it; becauſe the Underſtanding can no more oppoſe Truth, as Truth, than the Will can refuſe Good, as Good.

CHAP. LXI.

Concerning SELF-MURDER.

IT is God alone that hath Right to diſpoſe of the Life of Man; 'twas he alone that gave it; and it is he alone that has Power to take it away.

THERE is no Foundation for what ſome pretend, that God has given us greater Power over our own Lives, than over other Mens: We find no ſuch Power given us in Scripture, which is the only Revelation of God's Will; and, I am ſure, Nature teacheth us no ſuch thing; nay,

Nature

Nature teacheth the quite contrary; when God made us, he did not make us the abſolute Lords and Maſters of ourſelves; we cannot diſpoſe of ourſelves as we pleaſe, but are his Creatures and Subjects, and muſt receive Laws from him; and that, in ſuch Inſtances, wherein the Injury is done only to ourſelves.

To murder a kind Friend and Benefactor, is a greater Evil than to murder a Stranger; to murder a Parent or a Child, a Wife or a Huſband, is ſtill a greater Evil: If the Nearneſs of the Relation increaſeth the Sin, nobody is ſo near to us as ourſelves; and, therefore, there is no ſuch unnatural Murder as this.

Men may be in ſuch evil Circumſtances as make Death deſirable; but no conſidering Man will exchange the Sufferings of this Life, for the endleſs Miſeries of the next.

God forbid, that we ſhould pronounce a final, and peremptory Sentence, upon all thoſe unfortunate Perſons who have died by their own Hands; we know not what Allowances God may make for ſome Mens Opinions of the Lawfulneſs of it, and for the Diſtraction of other Mens Thoughts and Paſſions, through a ſettled Melancholy, or ſome violent Temptation; we are not to limit the ſovereign and prerogative Grace of God, but to conſider the Nature of the thing, according to the Terms of the Goſpel: A very good Man may have his Fancy diſturbed, and may paſs a falſe Judgment upon himſelf; but this is no Reaſon for God to condemn him, no more than God will juſtify a preſuming and enthuſiaſtick Hypocrite, becauſe he juſtifieth himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXII.

Againſt IMPATIENCE, ANGER, *and* MURMURING.

THE Angry and Impatient are like ſick People, who, we uſe to ſay, cannot enjoy the greateſt Proſperities; for, let Things be never ſo fair without, they will raiſe Storms within their own Breaſts.

WHEN we ſuffer any thing from Men, be it never ſo unjuſtly in reſpect of them, we are yet to confeſs, it is moſt juſt in reſpect of God.

THE only Miſchief reproachful Words can do us, is to make us angry, and then our Anger may do us many more; whereas, he that meekly paſſeth them by, is never the worſe for them; nay, the better, for he ſhall be rewarded by God for that Patience.

MEEKNESS and Charity are the Evangelical Graces, which will moſt recommend and aſſimilate us to him, who was meek and lowly in Heart.

THOSE who glory moſt in their Paſſion and Anger, know very well how to grow mild and bear with hard Words from Princes, and from thoſe by whom they expect to be preferred; in thoſe Caſes they maſter themſelves, they can ſtifle their Reſentments in view of ſome temporal Intereſt, and they neither will, nor can do it upon Account of Eternity. We are to lay it as an infallible Maxim, that in this Vale of Tears every Man muſt meet with Sorrows and Diſaſters;

Diſaſters and then ſure we may take our Peculiar with Evenneſs of Temper, as being but the natural Conſequent of our being Men.

When we ſuffer ſuch Things as are grievous to Fleſh and Blood, Submiſſion to the Will of God does not require that we ſhould not feel our Sufferings, that we ſhould not be afflicted with them, nor complain of them; but he ſubmits, who receives the bitter Cup, and drinks it, tho' with a trembling Heart and Hand.

Nothing, indeed, can make Pain eaſy, for that is matter of Senſe. But a good Perſuaſion of the Providence of God will fortify our Minds to bear it; and that is much the ſame thing, whether our Pains be leſs, or our Minds ſtronger.

This is our Submiſſion to the Will of God in ſuffering, that how uneaſy ſoever it be to us, we are ſo far from complaining againſt God, that we would not have it otherwiſe, when God ſeeth fit it ſhould be ſo; that tho' we do not, and cannot chuſe Sufferings, yet we chuſe that the Will of God ſhould be done, tho' it be to ſuffer. Another Act of Submiſſion to God is, when we wait patiently on God, till he think fit to deliver us; when, notwithſtanding all we ſuffer, our Hope, and Truſt, and Dependence, is ſtill on God.

We have, it may be, loſt ſome Part of our Eſtates, a dear Friend, or near Relation, a Child, it may be an only Child, but all theſe are uncertain Comforts; and when the Caſe is doubtful, whether it be good for us or not, we ought, in all Reaſon, to acquieſce in the divine Will, and conclude that is beſt for us which God does: A wiſe God can never miſtake; and a good God will conſult our Happineſs; and that

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is Reaſon enough, in the moſt difficult and perplexed Caſes, to ſubmit patiently to Providence.

When we are ſick or wounded, we ſuffer deep Inciſions to be made, and we take Remedies very ungrateful; we undergo a thouſand Fatigues, Labours, and Inconveniencies, to raiſe our Fortune, and to get Wealth: In a Word, nothing ſeems hard that is profitable; why then are we ſo averſe to Sufferings, if we conſider the wonderful, excellent Advantages we ſhall reap from them?

If we are proud of thoſe Wounds we have received in the Service of our Prince and Country, why ſhould we not be ſo too of what we ſuffer for Jeſus Chriſt's Sake?

I cannot imagine how a Man, ſomewhat ſtrongly taken up with the Thoughts of Jeſus Chriſt crucified, can complain of any Sufferings whatſoever: Muſt we not be unreaſonable, to the higheſt Degree, to pretend to greater Privileges and Immunities, than the eternal Son of God; and to find Fault that he deals with us, as he did with that dear Object of his Love?

There are but two Evils which deſerve the Name of great Evils; Sin, and the Wrath of God, which Sin makes us liable too; Meanneſs and Poverty are grievous only in Proportion to our Pride.

'Tis by ſuffering with Patience and Humility, that we may hope the Mercy of God will relieve us; ſo our own Intereſt does viſibly engage us to ſuffer with Submiſſion.

Murmuring hath ſomething near akin to Blaſphemy, ſince it conſiſts in our thinking that we have juſt Cauſe to complain of what God does, or permits, in our taking upon us to judge of his Actions; nay, to cenſure and reprove them, which is ſo prodigious a Blindneſs as

would ſeem incredible, if we had not daily Inſtances of it.

'Twould be a very great Miſtake to imagine we may be very ready to ſuffer with Conſtancy any great Pains, when we have uſed ourſelves to indulge all our Appetites, when we have led a ſoft and voluptuous Life; 'tis by denying ourſelves almoſt every thing. 'Tis by depriving ourſelves not only of what is ſuperfluous, but even of ſome Part of what is neceſſary; 'tis by a continual Mortification, that we may fit ourſelves for the Exerciſe of Patience.

CHAP. LXIII.

Concerning CONTENTMENT.

ALL our Murmurings, in what Condition ſoever, will be ſilenced, if we duly conſider, 1*ſt*, that whatever God affords to any, is upon Bounty, not of Right: 2*dly*, That his Bounty is more or leſs univerſally diffuſed to all; ſo that he who has the leaſt, cannot juſtly ſay but he hath been liberally dealt with: 3*dly*, If we compare our good Things with our evil, we ſhall find our good far ſurmounting: 4*thly*, That we ſhall find them yet more ſo, if we compare them with the Good we have done, and our Afflictions ſcarce diſcernible, if balanced with our Sins: 5*thly*, That it belongs to God, as Governor of the Univerſe, to make ſuch Diſtributions as may beſt preſerve the State of the Whole: 6*thly*, That God, notwithſtanding that univerſal Care, hath alſo a peculiar Aſpect on every particular Perſon,

and

and diſpoſeth to him what he diſcerns beſt for him in ſpecial: *7thly*, If we compare our Adverſities with thoſe of other Men, we ſhall always find ſomething that equals, if not exceeds our own.

Let us conſider how far we are from deſerving any good Thing from God, and then, inſtead of murmuring that his Mercies are no more, we will ſee Reaſon to admire and praiſe the Bounty of God, that they are ſo many.

We may challenge the moſt miſerable, or the moſt querulous Man living, to produce Cauſes of Complaint, proportionable to thoſe of Thankſgiving.

Can we argue an Unkindneſs from any temporal Wants, who have the Entail of an eternal Inheritance?

It is the Character of an unworthy Nature, to write Injuries in Marble, and Benefits in Duſt.

Proſperity is not always good for us, nor is Affliction always for our hurt; God may make ſome Men proſperous in Anger, and chaſtiſe others in great Love and Kindneſs.

Tho' there are a thouſand fooliſh Sinners who never conſider this, yet all Mankind agree, that that is beſt for us in this World, which will make us eternally happy in the next; and that is a very great Evil, which will betray us to eternal Miſeries.

Many have put themſelves out of Love with what they have, only by thinking upon what they want.

Our Diſcontents are uſually ſuch as *Ahab*'s for his Neighbour's Vineyard, *Haman*'s for *Mordecai*'s Obeyſance, *Ahitophel*'s for having his Counſel rejected; every Diſappointment of our Avarice, Ambition, and Pride, fills our Heart with Bitterneſs, and our Mouths with Clamours.

It may be ſaid, that generally thoſe that are the fartheſt removed from Want, are ſo from Content too; they take no Notice of all the real ſubſtantial Bleſſings they enjoy, leave theſe forgotten and neglected, to go in queſt after ſome fugitive Satisfaction, which, like a Shadow, flieth ſtill faſter, in proportion to their Purſuit.

A diſcontented Mind is ſo intent upon his Purſuits, that he hath no Reliſh of his Acqueſts.

We look but upon the Outſide of other Mens Conditions; and many a Man that is envied by his Neighbours, as a wonderful happy Perſon, hath yet ſome ſecret Trouble which makes him think much otherwiſe of himſelf.

Aristippus being bemoaned for the Loſs of a Farm, replied with ſome Sharpneſs upon his Condoler; You have but one Field, and I have yet three left; why ſhould not I rather grieve for you? Intimating, that a Man is not ſo much to eſtimate what he hath loſt, as what he hath left.

There is not ſuch a mighty Difference, as ſome Men imagine, between the Poor and the Rich; in Pomp, and Shew, and Opinion, there is a great deal; but little as to the true Pleaſures and Satisfactions of Life: They enjoy the ſame Earth, and Air, and Heavens; Hunger and Thirſt makes the poor Man's Meat and Drink as pleaſant and refreſhing, as all the Varieties which cover a rich Man's Table; and the Labour of a poor Man is more healthful, and many times more pleaſant too, than the Eaſe and Softneſs of the Rich; to be ſure, much more eaſy than the Cares and Solicitudes, the Pride and Ambition, Diſcontents and Envyings, and Emulations, which commonly attend an exalted Fortune.

What-

WHATSOEVER the Children of God want, is, (whatever the World may think of it) in Reality, and according to right Reaſon, ſometimes hurtful, often ſuperfluous, and always unneceſſary: A Child of God may want, indeed, what is neceſſary for the Preſervation of Life; he may periſh with Cold, Hunger, and Thirſt; but it is not neceſſary to live here, to be happy; one may be ſo after Death, and in Death itſelf: Nothing is neceſſary in order to be happy, but to love God, and to be loved by him.

THE Perſuaſion, or rather the Senſe of the Love of God, makes the Happineſs of Saints and Angels in Heaven: Why ſhould not the ſame Advantage make the Satisfaction of the Children of God upon Earth?

NONE but Men of a true and ſubſtantial Piety, have Reaſon to be truly contented; neither ought they to be ſo at all Times, and in all Reſpects, ſince we ought never to be ſatisfied with the preſent State of our Soul, and of our Advancement in Piety, which ought always to appear but ſmall in our Eyes.

THE true Believer may be aſſured, that nothing happens to him, but becauſe it is more advantageous for him, than the contrary would be: As for Inſtance, If he be ſick, he may reſt ſatisfied that he is ſo, becauſe Sickneſs will turn more to his Advantage than Health; if he is ſlandered or perſecuted, he may be ſure that he is ſo, only becauſe it is more for his Intereſt, than to be praiſed, and be at Reſt.

NOTHING but what is an Obſtacle to our Salvation, ought to cauſe us any Grief; and nothing but what can promote it, ought to cauſe us any Joy.

THERE are but two Ways to be contented; the one is, to make Things happen according to

our Deſires; the other, to conform our Deſires to what happens; the Firſt is impracticable; there remains then but the Second, which is very reaſonable and eaſy.

If Providence makes us poor, we muſt conſider, not how we lived when we were rich, but how it becomes a poor Man to live.

Every Condition and Relation having peculiar Duties belonging to it, our Duty muſt change as our Condition does; the Duties of Princes and Subjects, of Magiſtrates and private Men, of a low and mean, and of an exalted and plentiful Fortune, of Parents and Children, of Maſters and Servants, are of a very different Nature; and when we conform ourſelves to our Condition, we ſubmit to Providence, which giveth us no new Rules of Life, but may impoſe new Duties on us, by putting us into a new State: The Laws of God preſcribe us the Rules of our Duty in all Conditions and Circumſtances of Life; the Providence of God chuſes our Condition for us, and that directs us what Laws we are to obſerve, what Duties we owe, and to whom: If our preſent Condition and Circumſtances of Life do not determine our Duty, it is impoſſible ever to know what our Duty is.

CHAP. LXIV.

Againſt Pride *and* Envy.

'Tis nothing but the Fancy of Singularity that puffs us up: To breathe, to walk, to hear, to ſee, are excellent Powers; yet no Body is proud of them, becauſe they are common to the whole Kind; and therefore, if we would obſerve

obſerve the great Number of thoſe that equal or exceed us, even in the more appropriate Endowments, we ſhould not put ſo exceſſive a Price upon ourſelves.

THIS is the common Guilt of all proud and haughty Perſons; they are ſo buſy in admiring themſelves, that they overlook all that is valuable in others; and ſo think they owe not ſo much as common Civility to other Men, whilſt they ſet up themſelves, as *Nebuchadnezzar* did his Image, to be worſhipped of all.

CRUELTY to others is the Effect of a great Pride and Haughtineſs of Heart; we look upon others with ſuch Contempt, that we think it no Matter how they are uſed; we think they muſt bear Blows from us, when, in the mean Time, we are ſo tender of ourſelves, that we cannot hear the leaſt Word of Diſparagement, but we are all on a Flame.

BOASTING and Oſtentation makes a Man uncapable of receiving or doing a Benefit; no Man will do him a good Turn, becauſe he foreſees he will arrogate it to himſelf, as the Effect of his Merit; and none (that are not in ſome great Exigence) will receive one from him, as knowing it ſhall be not only proclaimed, but magnified much above the true Worth.

CIVILITY and Modeſty of Converſation is always ſafe, but Pride and Inſolence may ereate us Enemies, who may in time, how mean ſoever they are at preſent, be able to return our Inſolence.

LET us conſider how inſufferable Pride is in Creatures ſo frail, ſo full of Faults and Imperfections, as we are all by Nature; and let us never forget that excellent Saying of a great Apoſtle; *What haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? Now, if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou glory?*

Let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom, which is so very imperfect, so hard to be attained, and yet so easy to be lost.

No Man truly knows himself, but he grows daily more contemptible in his own Eyes.

The Faults of others ought to excite our Pity towards them, our Caution as to ourselves, and our Thankfulness to God, if he hath hitherto preserved us from the like; for who made thee to differ from another?

Envy being a Sorrow at the Prosperity of another, must needs be directly contrary to that Desire of it which is the Effect of Love; so that if Charity bear Sway in the Heart, 'twill certainly chase out Envy.

There can be no greater and more direct Opposition against God, than for me to hate and wish ill to a Man, for no other Reason, but because God has loved and done well to him; and then in respect of the Man, 'tis the most unreasonable Thing in the World to love him the less, merely because he hath those good Qualities for which I ought to love him more.

CHAP. LXV.

Against Lying.

Speech is given us as the Instrument of Intercourse and Society one with another, the Means of discovering the Mind, which otherwise lies hid and concealed; so that, were it not for this, our Conversations would be but the same

as

as of Beasts: Now, this being intended for the Good and Advantage of Mankind, 'tis a Due to it, that it be used to that Purpose; but he that lyes is so far from paying that Debt, that on the contrary, he makes his Speech the Means of injuring and deceiving him he speaks to.

If it be so great a Provocation to give a Man the Lye, then surely to be guilty of that Fault, must be a mighty Reproach.

The great Uses of Speech being the glorifying of God, and the benefiting of Men; what Part soever of our Discourses agrees not with these primitive Ends, will not hold Weight in the Balance of the Sanctuary.

The Man that lyeth, tho' in a Zeal to God's Glory, shall yet be judged as a Sinner; *Rom.* iii. 7.

Thou thinkest thou hast been very cunning, when thou hast over-reach'd thy Brother; but God knows all the while, there is another over-reaching thee, and cheating thee of what is infinitely more precious, even thy Soul; the Devil herein deals with thee as Fishers use to do; those that will catch a great Fish, will bait the Hook with a less; and so the great one coming with Greediness to devour that, is himself taken; so thou that art gaping to swallow thy poor Brother, art thyself made a Prey to that great Devourer; and, alas! what will it ease thee in Hell, that thou hast left Wealth behind thee upon Earth, when thou shalt there want that which the meanest Beggar here enjoyeth, even a Drop of Water to cool thy Tongue?

An officious Lye, which hurts no Body, but is advantageous to many, preserving one from committing a Sin, and another from an imminent Danger or Loss, cannot be reckoned as a Sin; for in it there is nothing which God abominates chiefly

chiefly in Lye, but rather the contrary; for this Reason the *Egyptian* Midwives, in telling an officious Lye for the saving of the *Hebrew* Children, were so far from being blamed, that they were commended.

In *Sparta*, when all Laws against Theft proved ineffectual, at last they fixt the Penalty on them that were robbed, and by that did the Business; if it was made as infamous to be flattered, as 'tis to flatter, I believe it might have the like Effect.

There is Difference between *mentiri*, and *mendacium dicere*, that is, lying, and speaking of an Untruth, or Thing that is false; *mentiri*, is *contra mentem iri*, which tho' it be no good Etymology of the Word, is a good Notion of the Thing; that is, to go against one's Mind, or speak what one does not think; hence a Man may speak an Untruth, and yet not lye, when he thinks he speaks the Truth; and on the contrary, may speak what is materially true, and yet lye, when he speaks what he thinks not to be true.

Our Tongues should be employed, 1*st*, in Praises and Thanksgivings to God; 2*dly*, in talking of all his wondrous Works; 3*dly*, in Prayer to him; 4*thly*, in Confession of him and his Religion, whatever the Hazard be; 5*thly*, in Teaching, Instructing and Counselling of others; 6*thly*, in Exhorting them; 7*thly*, in Comforting them that need it; 8*thly*, in Reproving them.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXVI.

Concerning Evil Speaking *and* Judging *of* Others.

EVIL Speaking consists of saying Things of others, which tend to their Disparagement and Reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their Reputation and good Name; whether the Things be true or not: If they be false, and we know it, it is downright Calumny: If they be false, and we do not know it, but take upon the Report of others, it is however a Slander: If true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a Defamation, and it is a Fault to say it, unless there be some good Reason for it besides, as for the Prevention of some great Evil, or the procuring of some considerable Good to ourselves or others: It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our Duty to do this in order to the probable Amendment of the Person of whom Evil is spoken, and when we are legally called to bear Witness concerning the Fault and Crime of another: It is further lawful to publish the Faults of others in our own necessary Defence and Vindication; for in that Case, Charity begins at home; we are to love our Neighbour as ourselves; so that the Love of ourselves is the Rule and Measure of our Love to our Neighbour, and therefore first, otherwise it could not be the Rule; and it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would rise thus high, and no Man would hurt

hurt another Man's Reputation, but where his own is in real Danger: It is alſo lawful to publiſh the Faults of others for Caution and Warning to a third Perſon that is in Danger of being infected by the Company or ill Example of another, or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much Confidence in him.

THO' every Diſcovery of another's Fault be, in the ſtrict natural Senſe of the Word, a Detraction, yet it will not always be the Sin of Detraction; becauſe in ſome Inſtances there may ſome higher Obligation intervene, and ſuperſede that we owe to the Fame of our Neighbour, and in thoſe Caſes it may not only be lawful, but neceſſary to expoſe him; it may often fall out, that by concealing one Man's Fault, I may be injurious to another, nay to a whole Community, and then I aſſume the Guilt I conceal, and by the Laws both of God and Man, am judged an Acceſſory.

EVERY Body enjoys three Things, which are very precious and dear to him, Life, Eſtate and Honour; no Body ſets up for a Judge of other Mens Life or Eſtate; why ſhould we pretend to more Power over the Honour of our Brethren?

WHENEVER we hear any Man evil ſpoken of, if we know any Good of him, let us ſay that.

WHEN Men ſpeak ill of you, do as *Plato* ſaid he would do in that Caſe, live ſo, as that no Body may believe them.

THE true Art of Converſation, if any can hit upon it, ſeems to be this, an appearing Freedom and Openneſs, with an abſolute Reſervedneſs, as little appearing as is poſſible.

UNTIL we know Mens Hearts, we are at the beſt but imperfect Judges of their Actions; we may eaſily be deceived in our Judgments, and may think them to be much better or worſe, than in Truth they are, becauſe we cannot certainly tell

tell what Circumſtances there may be to excuſe or aggravate them, with what Mind they were done, how ſtrong the Temptations, and how weak the Judgment of him that was ſeduced; but we are conſcious to all the ſecret Springs, Motives and Circumſtances of our own Actions.

We muſt judge of Men and Things, as far as is neceſſary to the prudent Government of our Lives, and to the Preſervation of Peace, and Juſtice, and good Order in the World; this does not intrench upon God's Prerogative; but then we aſſume ſuch a Judgment to ourſelves as belongs only to God, when we judge Mens Hearts, and ſecret Thoughts, and Intentions, and when we paſs Judgment on their final State.

Every one of us hath a double Weight and double Meaſure; concerning others, all their Virtues are ſmall, light, and of little Value, and on the contrary, all their Faults are great and intolerable, a Mote looks like a Beam; but concerning ourſelves, our Virtues are bright and tranſcendent, and our Imperfections inconſiderable; no Body is free of that Exceſs of Self-love, no not even the beſt Men, witneſs *David*, who was ſo angry at the Injuſtice of the rich Man, who had taken away the poor Man's Ewe Lamb, tho' at the ſame Time having done ſomething much more criminal, he laid nothing to his own Charge.

Whereas we never want Reaſons to excuſe ourſelves, we find none to excuſe others; we divide our Severity and Indulgence, but with ſo much Partiality, that we keep all the latter to ourſelves, and the former for our Brethren.

A raſh Judgment does but little Harm to him who is judged, but it does always a great deal of Hurt to him that judgeth.

Avoid

Avoid thoſe Things in yourſelf, which in others do moſt diſpleaſe you; and remember, that as your Eye obſerves others, ſo are you obſerved by God, by Angels and by Men.

We mind every thing but ourſelves: If we did examine our Behaviour, as we do that of others, we ſhould be aſhamed and reform; but how few do obſerve themſelves, and make ſerious Reflections on all their Actions! Therefore we ſhould uſe ourſelves never to think of other Mens Faults, without conſidering at the ſame Time, if we are free from them.

There is a Woe pronounced, as well to thoſe who call Evil Good, as Good Evil.

CHAP. LXVII.

Concerning Reproofs.

Mildness is always alike neceſſary, whether we will bring into the Way of Truth a Man in Error, or reprove a Sinner; every Body knows how *Nathan*, tho' he ſpoke in God's Name, went about cenſuring of *David*, and with what holy Device he drew from him the Confeſſion of his Fault; what then ought not to do thoſe, who being not endued with the Character of that Prophet, undertake to give ſuch-like Counſels? With what Care ought they not to ſeek the Ways and Means to allay what is ungrateful and odious in that Office?

'Tis not ſo much want of Charity in thoſe who ought to cenſure, as want of Tractableneſs in thoſe

thoſe who deſerve Cenſure, which makes this Duty ſo little practiſed.

One can ſcarce give a greater Proof of a great Progreſs in Holineſs, of a Heart full of God, and at the ſame Time, of a right, juſt and knowing Mind, than to receive with Humility and Submiſſion the Advices given us; and 'tis what we may chiefly admire in two Holy Men, King *David*, and St. *Peter* the Apoſtle; the Cenſure made to this laſt, for having been and eaten with uncircumciſed Men, was unjuſt and very unſeaſonable; he received it notwithſtanding, with great Meekneſs, he did not fall into a Paſſion againſt his Cenſurers, but he vindicated his Action, and proved by good Reaſons, that he ought to have done what he had done.

CHAP. LXVIII.

Concerning Oaths.

Tho' the Forms of Oaths be various, yet they amount to one and the ſame Thing; *viz.* God is my Witneſs, or let him puniſh me, if I tell a wilful Lye.

The Prohibition of our Saviour, *Swear not at all*, &c. ought to be underſtood of Oaths in ordinary Converſation, which appears from the Oppoſition which our Saviour makes, *But let your Communication*, &c. and in that he does not inſtance in ſuch Oaths as are expreſly by the Name of God, becauſe the *Jews* thought it unlawful, in ordinary Communication, to ſwear expreſly by the

the Name of God; but lawful to ſwear by the Creatures, as by Heaven and Earth.

THE Reaſon which is alledged againſt Oaths among Men, is much ſtronger againſt God confirming his Promiſes to us by an Oath; and yet he condeſcends to add his Oath to his Word; but tho' God condeſcends to repreſent himſelf to us after the Manner of Men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own Nature evil and ſinful.

CHAP. LXIX.

Againſt INTEMPERANCE.

AS Men uſe not to take Phyſick for Pleaſure, but Remedy, ſo neither ſhould they eat; for Eating is only intended to cure the natural Diſeaſe of Hunger; however we are not tied to ſuch Strictneſs, that we may eat no more than will juſt keep us from Starving; but we may alſo eat whatſoever, either for Kind or Quantity, moſt tends to the Health and Welfare of our Bodies.

To ſet an equal Stint to all Stomachs, is as ſenſeleſs a Thing, as a Law would be, which ſhould injoin, that Shoes for all Mankind ſhould be made upon one and the ſame Laſt.

CERTAINLY the Effects of Drink are ſuch, that had being Drunk, been firſt enjoined as a Puniſhment, we ſhould have thought him a more than ordinary Tyrant that had invented it.

COME to the Glutton, when he is labouring under the Load of an overcharged Stomach; to the

the Drunkard, when his Morning Qualm is revenging on him his laſt Night's Debauch; to the luſtful Perſon, when the Torment of his Bones admoniſheth him of the Sins of his Fleſh; and then ask them, whether Temperance be not more pleaſant than its contrary? I can ſcarce think the Devil hath ſuch ſtout Confeſſors, but will then betray his Cauſe.

THERE is no Man that hath tried both Courſes but his own Heart will tell him, there is infinitely more preſent Comfort and Pleaſure in Sobriety and Temperance, than ever all his drunken Revellings afforded him.

IF we will indulge all our vitious and fooliſh Appetites, no wonder that we are always complaining of Diſappointments; ſince in theſe the very Succeſs is a Defeat, and is but the exchanging the Pain of a craving ravenous Stomach, for that of a cloy'd and unſated.

How many moſt unnaturally pervert thoſe Bleſſings which God has given for the Support of Nature, to the Overthrow and Deſtruction of it?

WHO can deny that Drunkenneſs is a great Crime, ſince putting us under ſome ſort of Neceſſity of committing a great Number of very enormous Ones, it makes us accountable, not only for that we fall into by breaking the Rules of Temperance, but beſides of all others, this Firſt may caſt us upon? for we muſt not think that a Drunkard is anſwerable only for thoſe Sins he will actually commit; he is to anſwer for all thoſe he can fall into, and which he is not able to forbear.

LET us conſider, whether that falſe Kindneſs, that is maintained among Men by Drinking, be worthy to be compared with that real and ever-

lasting Kindness of God which is lost by it? Whether that foolish vain Mirth bear any Weight with the present Joys of a good Conscience here, or with those greater of Heaven hereafter? *Lastly*, Whether the unjust Reproach of wicked Men, the Shame of the World, be so terrible as the just Reproof of thine own Conscience at the present, and that eternal Confusion of Face that shall befall all those that go on in that Sin at the last Day? For all those that for fear of Reproach do shrink from their Obedience to Christ, may be said to be ashamed of him, and so expect the heavy Doom he hath pronounced on those that are so.

As Actions truly forc'd are very innocent, whereas nothing hinders, but that those that are done out of Compliance should be very wicked; it is plain that we do a much less Evil to those whom we force to be drunk, than to those we persuade to it by mere Solicitations.

There is no Drink so unpleasant, which the Love of a Debauch will not reconcile some to; so great a Malice do they bear to their Reason, that to oppress it, they are content to expose their Darling, and do Violence to their very Sense.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXX.

Concerning SLEEP, RECREATION, *and Spending of our* TIME.

SLEEP was intended to make us more profitable, not more idle; as we give Rest to our Beasts, not that we are pleased with their doing nothing, but that they may do us the better Service: By this one may judge what is temperate Sleeping; to wit, that which tends to the refreshing and making us more lively, and fit for Action; and to that End, a moderate Degree serves best: It will be impossible to set down just how many Hours is that moderate Degree, because, as in Eating, so in Sleep, some Constitutions require more than others.

THE End of Recreation likewise, is to fit us for Business, not to be itself a Business to us.

TIME is valuable only for the Sake of what may be done, and what may be enjoy'd in it.

SURELY the very best Use that can be made of Time, is to prepare for Eternity.

ALL Time that is past is not lost, but only when it turns to no Account to us, when we are never the better for it in Body or Soul; that Time is doubly lost, which we cannot review without Horror and Amazement; that Time is lost too, which Men must live over again, and tread back their Steps like him who has mistaken his Way; which is the Case of those who have

ſpent great part of their Lives ill, whenever they are convinced of their Folly and Danger.

Were Time an empty uſeleſs Thing, it would not then begin to appear ſo conſiderable, when all other Vanities grow in Contempt with us; the Unhappineſs of it is, that Men learn to prize it, as they do moſt other good Things, rather by the Want than by the Enjoying.

Tho' a Man muſt eat and drink, and perform the other Offices of a natural Life, which are common to him with Beaſts; yet this is not to live like a Man; a Life of Reaſon, Religion and Virtue, is properly the Life of a Man, and diſtinguiſheth him from all other Creatures in this World.

Therefore he who moſt adorns and perfects his own Mind, who brings moſt Glory to God, and does moſt Good to Men; ſuch a Man at Thirty Years old has lived more, and may properly be ſaid to have lived longer, than an old decrepit Sinner.

That Man hath lived a great while, how ſhort ſoever the Time be, who is old enough for Heaven, and for Eternity, who has anſwered the Ends of his Life, and is fit to remove out of it.

The Experience of the World tells us, That nothing more corrupts Mens Manners than Idleneſs; the Fleſh grows rampant with Sloth and Luxury, and Time itſelf is ſo uneaſy and troubleſome, when we have nothing to do, that Men rather chuſe to be wicked than to be idle; and therefore God, who foreſaw the Degeneracy of Mankind by the Fall, hath provided Work for us, that with the Sweat of our Brow we may eat our Bread.

Where God gives much Liberty from ſecular, he expects a greater Diligence in ſpiritual Employments.

In

In the very Height and Flouriſh of the Empire, *Auguſtus* himſelf ſcarce wore any Thing but of the Manufacture of his Wife, his Siſter, Daughters and Nieces, as *Suetonius* aſſures us: Should the gay Lilies of our Fields, which neither ſow nor ſpin, nor gather into Barns, be exempted from furniſhing others, and left to cloathe themſelves; 'tis to be doubted they would reverſe our Saviour's Parallel of *Solomon*'s Glories, and no Beggar in all his Rags would be arrayed like one of theſe.

CHAP. LXXI.

Of Retirement.

Retirement has three chief Advantages, which ought to make it to be valued by all thoſe who have a ſincere Deſire to be ſaved; it ſtops and prevents our Wandrings, by affording us the Means of recollecting ourſelves; it preſerveth us from the Infection which is inſeparable from a great worldly Intercourſe, it procures us all the Advantages of being ſilent, and ſhelters us from all the Dangers we are expoſed to, by too much ſpeaking, as People generally do.

In Retirement we are kept back neither by falſe Shame, Compliance, Fear of Men, nor by moſt of the other Conſiderations which ſo often hinder us from performing thoſe Duties we are not ignorant of.

A Christian remains alone, when he may be dispens'd from being with others; and he is with others, when it is not lawful for him to be alone; he works for himself, but without neglecting his Neighbour; he works for his Neighbour, but without leaving the Care he ought to take of himself.

CHAP. LXXII.

Concerning PRAYER.

THERE is an Art of Praying, and it is of all Arts the most important, and most beneficial; the Advantages of others are limited, but this helps us to every Thing.

THE most necessary Qualifications for a good Prayer, are without Doubt these Five; the Attention of the Mind to what we say; our earnest and vehement Desire of what we ask; our Humility, which persuades us we are unworthy to obtain it; our Trust, which assures us we shall infallibly get it; and Perseverance, which makes us not to be discouraged at our not receiving as soon as we ask.

THE Parable of the unjust Judge, and the Example of the *Canaanitish* Woman, do plainly shew, that God often refuses upon our first Petitions, some Favours which he grants upon our earnest and repeated Prayers.

MEN ought to continue instant in Prayer; not that mere Importunity prevails with God to give us those Things which he is otherwise unwilling

to

to grant, but becauſe it becomes us to be fervent and earneſt, to teſtify our Faith and Confidence in the Goodneſs of God, and the deep Senſe we have of our own Weakneſs, and Wants, and Unworthineſs, and that we ſet a true Value upon the Bleſſings and Favours of God, as worth all the Earneſtneſs and Importunity we can uſe; wherefore St. *Ambroſe* ſaid to *Monica*, the Mother of St. *Auſtin*, to encourage her to perſevere in her fervent Prayers for her Son, *Fieri non poteſt, ut filius tot lacrymarum pereat*; It cannot be, that the Son of ſo many Tears ſhould periſh.

If our Minds be wandering in Prayer, it is the Work only of the Tongue and Lips, which make it, in God's Account, no better than vain Babling; and it will be unreaſonable to expect that God ſhould attend and grant thoſe Suits of of ours, which we do not at all conſider ourſelves.

They who know the Pleaſure of converſing with God, need no Arguments to bring them to their Cloſet: Prayer is a pleaſant Duty, and if it ſeem otherwiſe to us, it is from ſome Diſtemper of our own Hearts, which, like a ſick Palate, cannot reliſh the moſt pleaſant Meat.

Can Men call him a Deity, to whom they will not attribute ſo much as they will to every ingenious Man, the Honour of being good Company? This is not only to be prophane, but abſurd.

In human Converſations we uſe not to find the Guſt and Reliſh of them, till we arrive to ſome Degree of Freedom; they that converſe as Strangers, are under Conſtraints and Uneaſineſs; and certainly the main Cauſe of that Diſguſt

Men have to a ſpiritual Intercourſe with God, is their Unaccuſtomedneſs to it.

All Men expect, that thoſe who depend on them, and know that they may have for asking, ſhould ask for what they want; and if wiſe and good Men expect this from their Dependents, a wiſe and good God may as reaſonably expect this from his Creatures, who have their whole Dependence on him.

Does it prove any Man to be mutable, to change only as a wiſe and immutable Rule requires him to change? And if this be the ſtanding Rule of Providence, it argues no more Change in God, to give when we ask, and not to give when we do not ask, than it is to puniſh a Man when he is wicked, and reward him when he is good.

It is no Reproach to the divine Nature and Providence, to ſay, that God is moved by our Prayers and Intreaties, to do that for us which otherwiſe he would not have done; for it neither unbecometh God nor Men to be moved by Reaſon; we live in a critical Age, which will not allow us to ſpeak intelligibly of God, becauſe we want Words ſufficiently to diſtinguiſh between the Motions and Actings of the divine Mind, and the Paſſions of Creatures; our Conceptions of the divine Nature are very imperfect, and ſo muſt our Words neceſſarily be; but if the Scripture be a good Rule both of believing and ſpeaking, we may very honourably ſay that of God, which God ſaith of himſelf: Some Men think that the Scriptures attributing Love, and Joy, and Delight, Hatred, Sorrow, and Compaſſion to God, is no better Reaſon to aſcribe ſuch Affections to him, than it is to ſay, that God has bodily Eyes, and Ears, and Feet, and Hands, becauſe the Scripture attributes them alſo

to

to God: But there is a wide Difference between these two; for the Scripture has taken sufficient Care to inform us, that God is an infinite and unbodied Spirit, without Shape or Figure; but these Affections which are attributed to God, are as essential to a Mind, as Wisdom and Knowledge; a pure Mind must have pure and intellectual Affections, which move with greater Strength and Certainty, tho' without the Disturbance of human Passions.

INDEED most of our Saviour's Parables proceed upon that Likeness and Resemblance which is between human Passions, and the Affections of the divine Nature; that we may certainly expect that from God, which we can reasonably expect from wise and good Men in the like Cases; what either Friendship, or a Love of Virtue, or natural Affections, or Interest, and Relation, and private Concernment will do, that God will do for us; as is evident in the Parables of the lost Sheep, and lost Groat, and prodigal Son, which could have no Foundation, were not God, in some Analogy, moved as Men are; and if it be thus, we see the Reason and Necessity of Prayer, and know how to pray to God so as to prevail; to pray to God as we would in the like Cases ask of Men, with the same Importunity, Ardour, Vehemence, Sorrow and Contrition, Trust and Dependence; for what will prevail with Men, will much more prevail with God.

BE careful you do not speak a Lye in your Prayers, which, tho' not observed, is frequently practised by careless Persons; especially in the Forms of Confession, affirming Things which they have no Thought of, professing Sorrow which is not, making a Vow they mean not.

LET

Let us not fly to God to ſave us from thoſe Evils we voluntarily run into, and which we do not care to avoid.

According to the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of *Rome*, the *Pſalmiſt* put a very odd and ſtrange Queſtion, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee?* Since they believe, that beſides God, there are in Heaven innumerable Angels and Saints in whom we ought to repoſe great Truſt and Confidence, and to whom we are to addreſs ſolemn Prayers and Supplications.

CHAP. LXXIII.

Of Confeſſion of Sins, *and* Repentance.

Our Confeſſion is not intended to inſtruct God, who knows our Sins much better than ourſelves do; but it is to humble ourſelves, and therefore we muſt not think to have confeſſed aright, till that be done.

When we confeſs our Sins to God, don't let us look upon it as Matter of Form only, that we are to tell God Almighty a ſad Story of ourſelves, and yet, in ſuch a Manner, as if we were not concerned for the Sin, nor God for the Puniſhment of it; but when we come to that Part of the Confeſſion, acknowledging our Offences by Thought, Word, and Deed; let us reflect on ſome of thoſe Tranſgreſſions we have repeated moſt, and have moſt Cauſe to repent of; let us think of them with Sorrow and Deteſtation.

By

By Repentance we give Glory to God, becauſe it is an Acknowledgment of his Holineſs, who hates Sin; and of his Juſtice, which will puniſh it; and of the Mercy of God, which is ready to pardon it.

If we had offended Man, as we have done God, we might deſpair of Pardon; but it is God, and not Man, that we have to deal with; and provided we ſubmit to the Terms of his Mercy, we have no Reaſon to deſpair of it.

Presumption is nothing elſe but Hoping, where God has given us no Ground to hope; this every Man does, that hopes for Pardon of Sins, and eternal Life, without that Repentance and Obedience to which alone they are promiſed.

If any thing will melt us into Tears, ſurely this will do it, to conſider that we have ſinned againſt him who made us, and continually preſerves us; and after all our Unkindneſs to him, did ſtill retain ſo great a Love for us, as to redeem us from Hell and Deſtruction, by the Death and Suffering of his Son; and, notwithſtanding all our Offences, does ſtill offer us Pardon and Peace, Life and Happineſs.

What can be more unreaſonable and diſingenuous, than to reſolve to be evil, becauſe God is good; and becauſe he ſuffers ſo long, to ſin ſo much the longer?

A Reſolution againſt Sin, which is not univerſal, is not true and ſincere, and is not taken up out of the Senſe of the intrinſical Evil of Sin, but upon ſome inferior Conſideration.

That Man is not reſolved to do a Thing, whatever he may pretend, who hath moſt Reaſon to do it at preſent, and may beſt do it now, and yet delays it. The Time paſt was ours, but

that

that is gone; the Time to come may be ours, and it may not; the Time present is the only Time that is ours; and therefore, if we will improve our Time, we must improve our present Time; we must repent To-day, and not put off repenting till To-morrow.

No Time is too soon to do that which is absolutely necessary; and no wise Man will neglect doing that at present, which unless it be done, he must be miserable for ever; and yet it may never be done, if it be not done at present.

Repentance can never be certain, when the Time to repent in is uncertain; to resolve to repent hereafter, is not to resolve to repent at any set or determined Time, but at any Time which is not present; and the Reason why we resolve to repent hereafter, will serve for all Hereafters, but will never serve for any Time present.

He who resolves to repent, but does not resolve to repent presently, tho' he knows he is sure of no other Time but the present to repent in, does not sincerely resolve to repent, but only resolves to delay his Repentance.

Old Age is a very unseasonable Time for Repentance, when we are full of Weakness and Infirmity, and our Minds are crooked and bowed down by Vice, as our Bodies are by Age, and as hard to be recovered to their first Streightness, which is yet a harder Task, when Sickness and old Age meet together: For how unfit must we be for the serious Work of our Lives, when we are hardly fit to do any thing?

The Time of Death is very fit to renew our Repentance, but sure not proper to begin it; and it is a most desperate Madness for Men to defer it till then: For, to say the mildest of it, it is the venturing

venturing our Souls upon ſuch miſerable Uncertainties, as no wiſe Man would truſt with any thing of the leaſt Value.

Can we think it fit for any Man to ſay thus to God, in a dying Hour, "Lord, now the World leaves me, I come to thee; I pray thee give me eternal Life, who could never afford to give thee one good Day of my Life; grant that I may live with thee, and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think upon thee: I muſt confeſs that I could never be perſuaded to leave my Sins out of Love to thee; but now I repent of them for Fear of thee: I am conſcious to myſelf, that I would never do any thing for thy Sake; but yet I hope thy Goodneſs is ſuch, that thou wilt forgive all the Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of my Life, and accept of this forced Submiſſion which I now make to thee: I pray thee, do not at laſt fruſtrate and diſappoint me in this Deſign, which I have laid of ſinning while I live, and getting to Heaven when I die?" Surely no Man can think it fit to ſay thus to God; and yet I am afraid this is the true Interpretation of many a Man's Repentance, who has deferred it till he comes to die.

There is but one Example, in the whole Bible, of the Repentance of a dying Sinner; I mean, that of the penitent Thief upon the Croſs; and the Circumſtances of his Caſe are ſo peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot ſee that it affords any Ground of Hope and Encouragement to Men in ordinary Caſes: We are not like to ſuffer in the Company of the Son of God, and of the Saviour of the World; and, if we could do ſo, it is not certain that we ſhould behave ourſelves towards him ſo well as the penitent

tent Thief did, and make ſo very good an End, of ſo very bad a Life.

How do we know, but that the Converſion of that penitent Thief was begun before? How do we know, but that he had had ſome good Thoughts either during his Life, or in the Priſon, where he had been kept for ſome time before the Feaſt of the Paſſover?

If there were not, as there is, a wide Difference between the Caſe of the penitent Thief and ours; it is but a faint Hope can be raiſed from a ſingle Example; and another we find not in the whole Bible. The *Iſraelites*, we read, were fed with *Manna* from Heaven; but would you not think him ſtark mad, that ſhould, out of Expectation of the like, neglect to provide for himſelf any Food? Yet it is full as reaſonable to depend upon this Example, as the other.

The miraculous Examples of God's Mercy and Grace to the dying Thief, and ſome others, are not to be drawn into Conſequence for the Encouragement of any in their Sins: A Prince will not endure, that his free Favours ſhould be made a Law to him, and the ſpecial Privilege of ſome be extended to all.

For one who has been hardened in a long Courſe of Sin, and making himſelf meet for the Company of damned Spirits in Hell, to be at laſt ſuddenly prepared and received into the pure and glorious Society above, is poſſible; but poſſible only, as Miracles are, by the Efficacy of infinite Power; and we cannot reaſonably expect ſuch Miracles; and are Heaven and Hell ſuch trivial Things, as to be left to an Uncertainty?

What Likelihood is there, that Men, who Yeſterday were very much in Love with their Sins,

Sins, and as little thought of falling out with them, as they did of their dying Day, ſhould To-day, aſſoon as they are arreſted with a threatning Sickneſs, be Penitents in good Earneſt, and abhor their Sins in a Minute, and be quite other Men, upon the View of the other World?

What can we imagine God will do for an obſtinate Sinner at the Point of Death? When God has uſed the Preaching of his Word, Exhortations, Promiſes, Threatnings, the Sacraments, Bleſſings, Chaſtiſements, Occaſions, Motives, inward Warnings, the Motions of his Spirit; when God, I ſay, has uſed thoſe Means for twenty, thirty, forty Years, to no Purpoſe, I cannot perceive what may be expected and depended on, upon the latter End of one's Life: In the ordinary Courſe of Grace, the Converſion is not wrought by ſudden and miraculous Inſpirations; the Goſpel ſaith nothing like it; therefore it concerns thoſe, who promiſe themſelves ſuch Miracles, to ſee what Grounds they have for it.

To refer our Repentance to our Life's End, is it not to deal with God as we do with an Enemy, to whom we ſurrender as late, and upon as good Articles as we can, and merely to avoid an utter Deſtruction?

Thoſe who are grounded upon the Falls of holy Men, thinking that they will likewiſe expiate their Sins by Repentance, and Reformation of their Lives; do they not argue as a Man, who would drink in Poiſon upon Hopes that it would not kill him, becauſe there have been ſome People poiſoned, that have eſcaped Death?

He that has a long Journey to go, and finds he has loſt a great Part of his Day in a wrong Way, will not need much Intreaty, either to turn into

into the right, or to quicken his Pace in it; and this is the Case of all those that have lived in any Course of Sin.

If a Man be sick, he will be well presently, if he can, and not put it off to the future: Most Men will gladly take the first Opportunity that presents itself of being rich or great; every Man almost catcheth at the very first Offers of a great Place, or a good Purchase, and secures them presently if he can; let us do thus so much more, in Matters so much greater; let us return from the Errors of our Ways, be well, save ourselves assoon as possibly we can.

To sin in hopes that hereafter we shall repent, is to do a Thing in hopes that we shall one Day be mightily ashamed of it, that we shall one Time or other be heartily grieved and troubled that we have done it, and with a thousand times we had never done it.

It may be the Case of any Man who ventures upon a wilful Sin; he may die in the very Act of it; and then his Repentance will come too late in the next World; and this so often happens, that no wise Man would venture his Soul upon it.

God is so merciful as to accept of returning Prodigals, but does not think fit to encourage us in Sin, by giving us Notice when we shall die, and when it is Time to think of Repentance.

If Sorrow for Sin, without a holy Life, can carry Men to Heaven, then, I am sure, Holiness is not necessary; then Men may see God without Holiness; and then the Promises of Pardon to Repentance (if dying Sorrow be true Repentance) overthrow the Necessity of a holy Life; and the Necessity of a holy Life contradicts the Promises of Pardon to such Penitents; and

and then either one or both of them muſt be falſe.

If we conſider the Difference between what is neceſſary to make us the Diſciples of Chriſt, and what is required of us when we are his Diſciples, we ſhall ſee a plain Reaſon why Faith and Repentance, as that ſignifieth Sorrow for Sin, and Vows of Obedience, will juſtify us in Baptiſm, but will not be accepted upon a Death Bed, after a Life ſpent in Wickedneſs.

If we relapſe into Sin after Baptiſm, no Repentance will be accepted but that which actually reforms our Lives: Sorrow for Sins, and Vows of a new Life, will be accepted at Baptiſm as the Beginnings of a new Life; but that is no Reaſon why they ſhould be accepted at our Death, when they are only the ſorrowful Concluſion of a wicked Life.

A Judge, a Father, or a Maſter, will not ſpare upon Promiſes and Vows of Reformation made out of Fear of Puniſhment; and why ſhould this be thought any thing more in a dying Sinner, than in other Malefactors? Why ſhould that be thought a ſufficient Reaſon for God to pardon, which we ourſelves think no Reaſon in all other Caſes?

What God properly deſires is, that we ſhould hate Sin; but we may love it with the Fear of Hell, as a weaned Child loves Milk, tho' he is afraid of the Wormwood laid on the Breaſt of his Nurſe.

Our Souls will have the ſame Affections in the other World as here, for there can be no Alteration; as the Tree falls, ſo it lies; and if we reſolve not to endeavour a Change till Death approach us, and think that our Reflections upon

a ſick Bed ate ſufficient to atone a miſ-ſpent Life, we ſhall be miſerably deceived.

Two Perſons walking together eſpy a Serpent; the one ſhrieks and crieth out at the Sight of it, the other kills it: So it is in Sorrow for Sin; ſome expreſs it by great Lamentations and Tears, others by greater and more real Effects of Hatred and Deteſtation, by forſaking their Sins, and by mortifying and ſubduing their Luſts; but he that kills it, does certainly beſt expreſs his inward Diſpleaſure and Enmity againſt it.

A Relapſe, a new Sin, calls back before the Juſtice of God all our old Crimes, and makes us liable to the Puniſhment due to them.

CHAP. LXXIV.

Concerning Forgiving of INJURIES.

THERE is ſcarce any Precept ſo often repeated in the New Teſtament, as this of loving and forgiving our Enemies. Thus *Epheſ.* iv. 32. *Coloſ.* iii. 13. 1 *Peter* iii. 9. and Abundance of other Places in Scripture; therefore 'tis the greateſt Abſurdity and Contradiction for Men to profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, and yet at the ſame time to reſiſt this, ſo expreſs Command of that Chriſt, whom they own as Maſter, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the Things I ſay?* ſaith Chriſt, *Luke* vi. 46. The whole World is divided into two great Families, Chriſt's and Satan's; and the Obedience each Man

Man pays, ſignifies to which of theſe Maſters he belongs: Now the Sin of Malice and Revenge is ſo much the Dictate of that wicked Spirit, that there is nothing can be a more direct obeying of him; whereas we cannot, in any thing, reſemble God more than in Goodneſs, and Kindneſs, and Mercy, and in a Readineſs to forgive thoſe who have been injurious to us, and to be reconciled to them.

CRUEL and revengeful Perſons, are apt to look upon Kindneſs to Enemies, as an abſurd and unreaſonable thing; but ſince God himſelf acts it in ſo much a higher Degree, who can without Blaſphemy ſay, 'tis unreaſonable?

KINDNESS and Goodneſs to Enemies is moſt eminently remarkable in God; and that not only in reſpect of the temporal Mercies, but chiefly in his ſpiritual; we are all, by our wicked Works, Enemies to him, and the Miſchief of that Enmity would have fallen wholly upon ourſelves: God had no Motive beſides that of his Pity to us, to wiſh a Reconciliation; yet ſo far was he from returning our Enmity, when he might have revenged himſelf to our eternal Ruin, that he deſigns and contrives how he may bring us to be at Peace with him: This is a huge Degree of Mercy and Kindneſs; but the Means he uſeth for effecting this is yet far beyond it; he ſent his own Son from Heaven to work it, and that not only by Perſuaſions, but Sufferings alſo; ſo much did he prize us miſerable Creatures, that he thought us not too dear bought with the Blood of his Son: The like Example of Mercy and Patience we have in Chriſt, both in laying down his Life for his Enemies, and alſo in that meek Manner of doing it. Now, ſurely, when all this is conſidered,

we may well make St. *John's* Inference, *Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another.*

Our Saviour in commanding us to love our Enemies, requires nothing of us but what he himſelf ſubmitted to with the greateſt Patience and Conſtancy of Mind in our ſtead, and wholly for our Advantage; he rendered Good for Evil to all Mankind, and ſhewed greater Love to us whilſt we were Enemies to him, than ever any Man did to his Friend; in the very Agony and Bitterneſs of Death, he poured out his Blood, a Sacrifice to God, for the Expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they ſhed it, pleading with God in the Behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuſe that was to be made for their Malice, that is, their Ignorance; and ſpending his laſt Breath in that moſt charitable Prayer for them, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Suppose a Man that were ranſomed either from Death or Slavery, by the Bounty and Sufferings of another, ſhould, upon his Releaſe, be charged by him that ſo freed him, in Return of that Kindneſs of his, to forgive ſome ſlight Debt which was owing him by ſome third Perſon, would you not think him the unthankfulleſt Wretch in the World, that would refuſe this ſo great a Benefactor? Yet ſuch a Wretch, and much worſe, is every revengeful Perſon: Chriſt hath bought us out of eternal Slavery with his own moſt precious Blood, and hath earneſtly recommended to us the Love of our Brethren, and that with the moſt moving Arguments drawn from the Greatneſs of his Love to us; and if we ſhall obſtinately refuſe him in

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ſo juſt, ſo moderate a Demand, how unſpeakable a Vileneſs is it?

Our Saviour, by commanding us to love our Enemies, has, in the moſt emphatical Manner that can be, commanded us to love all Men; and tho' this may ſeem a hard Duty, and not ſo eaſy to be reconciled either to our Inclination, or our Reaſon, yet, all things duly conſidered, it will not only appear reaſonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the Practice of it more eaſy and delightful, and upon all Accounts much more for our Benefit and Advantage, than the contrary.

It is commonly ſaid, that Revenge is ſweet; but to a calm and conſiderate Mind, Patience and Forgiveneſs are ſweeter.

The peaceable Spirit, that can quietly paſs by all Injuries and Affronts, enjoys a continual Calm, and is above the Malice of his Enemies; for, let them do what they can, they cannot rob him of his Quiet, he is firm as a Rock, which no Storms of Wind can move; when the furious and revengeful Man is like a Wave, which the leaſt Blaſt toſſes and tumbles from its Place.

Loving of Enemies is not only a reaſonable, but a pleaſant Duty, of which none can ſo well judge as thoſe that have practiſed it; the Nature of earthly Pleaſures, much more of ſpiritual, being ſuch, that 'tis the Enjoyment only that can make a Man truly know them; therefore how unjuſt and fooliſh is it for Men to ſay, This is irkſome and intolerable, who never ſo much as once offered to try, whether indeed it were ſo or no?

If not for their Sakes, yet for our own, we ſhould love our Enemies, and do Good to them that hate us; becauſe, to be thus affected to-

wards all Men, is as great Kindneſs to ourſelves, as it is Charity to others.

We ſhould love our Enemies, if not for what they are at preſent, yet for what they may be, and in hope, that by theſe Means, they may in time become our Friends.

Love for Love, is but Juſtice and Gratitude; Love for no Love, is Favour and Kindneſs; but Love for Hatred and Enmity, is a moſt divine Temper; a ſteady and immutable Goodneſs, that is not to be ſtirred by Provocation; for if Hatred and Enmity cannot extinguiſh Love, what can?

If both the Ways were equally in our Power, yet it is a much more deſirable Conqueſt to overcome Evil with Good, than with Evil; by this we can only conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the other we certainly conquer ourſelves, and perhaps our Enemy too.

What do we do by avenging ourſelves? We had but a weak and mortal Man to deal with, and we draw upon us God himſelf, who, from being our Defender, if we had ſuffered patiently for his Sake, becomes our Judge and our Adverſary.

You hate your Enemy, you ſay, becauſe he is wicked; but is it not much more true, that he ſeems to you to be wicked, only becauſe you hate him?

Vengeance *is mine, I will repay it, ſaith the Lord*, Rom. xii. 19. And then he that will act Revenge for himſelf, what does he but encroach upon the ſpecial Right and Prerogative of God, ſnatch the Sword, as it were, out of his Hand, as if he knew better how to wield it; which is at once a Robbery and Contempt of the divine Majeſty?

What

What a heavy Curse does every revengeful Person lay upon himself, when he says, *Forgive us our Trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us!* He does, in effect, beg God not to forgive him, and 'tis too sure that Part of his Prayer will be heard; he shall be forgiven just as he forgiveth, that is, not at all.

Whensoever you are contriving and plotting a Revenge, you quite mistake the Mark; you think to hit the Enemy, and, alas! you wound yourself to Death.

What can be more senseless for me, when a Man has done me an Injury, to think to wipe off that by exposing myself to more? When he has given me the Lye, to invite him to give me the Stab too? Did ever any Man attempt to make up a Breach by widening it, to close his Wound by tearing it further?

What a Riddle is this they call Gallantry, which so startles at the weakest Noise, yet stands undauntedly the Stroke of a Thunderbolt? They who so dread the Reproach of vain impotent Man, do yet confidently encounter the Anger of omnipotent God.

The false Rules of Honour of Duellers will not pass in another World, in the highest and greatest Court of Honour, from whence there is no Appeal.

Would Men dare but meet single with their own sober Thoughts, 'twould certainly supersede all other Duels.

How very partial and unequal are we to hope so easily to be forgiven, and yet to be so hard to forgive! Would we have God, for Christ's Sake, to forgive us those numberless and monstrous Provocations, which we have been guilty of against his divine Majesty; and shall we not for his

Sake, for whose Sake we ourselves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

Our blessed Lord himself was derided in his Life by the *Pharisees*, mocked and reviled at his Death by the Priests, the Elders, the Soldiers, nay, by casual Passengers; and shall a Christian expect an Immunity from what his Saviour has borne before him? He that does so, is too delicate a Member for a crucified Head.

Forgiveness is sometimes taken chiefly for abstaining from Revenge, and so far we are to forgive our Enemies, even while they continue so; we are also to pray for them, and to do good Offices to them, especially of common Humanity; but sometimes Forgiveness does signify a perfect Reconciliation to those that have offended us, so as to take them again into our Friendship, which they are by no Means fit for, till they have repented of their Enmity, and laid it aside.

Our Saviour has commanded us to love our Enemies, to do Good to them that hate us; but he has left it to our Prudence to do it in such a Manner, as may be most effectual both to reclaim the Offender, and likewise to secure ourselves against future and further Injuries. Notwithstanding this Precept, we may make a Difference between our Enemies and our Friends; there are Degrees of Love, and there are Benefits of several Rates and Sizes; we may abstain from Revenge, yea, and love our Enemy, and wish him, and do him Good; and yet it will not presently be necessary that we should take him into our Bosom, and treat him, and trust him, as our intimate and familiar Friend; for every one that is not our Enemy, is not fit to be

be our Friend, much leſs one that has been our Enemy, and perhaps is ſo ſtill.

'Tis not every light Offence of a Friend, that ſhould make you renounce his Friendſhip; there muſt be ſome Allowance made to the Infirmities of Men; and if you have Occaſion to pardon him ſomewhat To-day, perhaps you may give him Opportunity to requite you To-morrow; therefore nothing but Unfaithfulneſs and incorrigible Vice, ſhould break this Bond.

Men uſually call them their Friends, with whom they have an Intimacy and Frequency of Converſation, tho' that Intimacy be indeed nothing but an Agreement and Combination in Sin: The Drunkard thinks him his Friend that will keep him Company; the deceitful Perſon, him that will aid him in his Cheats; the proud Man, him that will flatter him; and ſo generally in all Vices, they are looked on as Friends, that advance and further us in them; but God knows, this is far from Friendſhip; ſuch a Friend as this the Devil himſelf is in the higheſt Degree, who is never backward in ſuch Offices; the true Friendſhip is that of a direct contrary making, 'tis a Concurrence and Agreement in Virtue, not in Vice.

One of the firſt Priciples of human Wiſdom is to have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be poſſible, to ourſelves.

Where there is a thorough Forgiveneſs, there will be as great a Readineſs to benefit an Enemy as a Friend, nay, perhaps, in ſome Reſpects, a greater.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXV.

Concerning Alms-giving, *and other* Acts *of* Mercy.

GIVING to the Poor, is directly putting our Wealth into the Hands of God; *He that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the Lord*, Prov. xix. 17. and that too on solemn Promise of Repayment, as it follows in that Verse, *That which he has given, will he pay him again.* It is amongst Men, thought a great Disparagement when we refuse to trust them; it shews we either not think them sufficient, or not honest; How vile an Affront is it then to God, thus to distrust him; nay, indeed, how horrid a Blasphemy?

We think him a very improvident Husbandman, that to save a little Seed at present, sows so thin as to spoil his Crop; and the same Folly 'twill be in us, if by the Sparingness of our Alms, we make ourselves a lank Harvest hereafter, lose either all, or a great Part of those Rewards, which God has provided for the liberal Alms-giver.

That Tribute which we desire to pay out of our Estates, we cannot pay to God himself; 'tis the Poor that are, as it were, his Proxies and Receivers; and therefore whatever we should, by way of Thankfulness, give back again unto God, our Alms is the Way of doing it.

Liberality is to be measured not so much by what is given, as by the Ability of the Giver: The

The pooreſt Man may be as charitable as a Prince, he may have as much Kindneſs in his Heart, tho' his Hand cannot be ſo bountiful and munificent; God regards not how much we do, but from how much it proceeds; he does much, that loves much.

Those who are ſenſible that they receive all from God, and are thankful for it, remember that they are but God's Stewards, which is a great Honour, but a great Truſt too, and requires Faithfulneſs in Thankfulneſs to God, who has ſo liberally provided for them; they think themſelves bound to imitate his Goodneſs to ſupply the Wants, and undertake the Patronage, of thoſe who want their Help, and in the Judgment of Prudence and Charity deſerve it.

Is it reaſonable to expect that God, in mere Grace and Kindneſs, ſhould beſtow Heaven upon that Man who will not give a Morſel of Bread, nor a Cup of Drink, to the Poor and Neceſſitous for God's Sake? Do we think that Man deſerves any Kindneſs, who will ſhew none?

Men look upon their Acts of Mercy as Things purely voluntary, that they have no Obligation to; and the Effect of it is this, that they are apt to think very highly of themſelves when they have performed any, tho' never ſo mean; but never blame themſelves, tho' they omit all, which is a very dangerous Perſuaſion.

There is no ſenſual Pleaſure in the World, comparable to the Delight and Satisfaction that a good Man takes in doing Good; would God thoſe, who make it their Trade to hunt after Pleaſures, would try but this one Piece of Epicuriſm; and then, I doubt not, they would acknowledge that all Meat is inſipid, compared with that which they eat with the poor Man's Mouth;

Mouth; the most splendid Apparel, sordid and inglorious, in respect of that they wear upon his Back.

Men say, indeed, that Gold by Preparation, becomes a sovereign Cordial; but, certainly, it never does rejoice the Heart so much, as when Charity is the Chymist: The poor Man's Hand is the best Limbeck to extract this Magistery and Tincture; the Flames of Love will really perform those Miracles they of the Furnace boast of.

It may be questioned whether testamentary Charities will be brought into the Account of our Lives, if we do no Good while we live: These Death-bed Charities, are too like a Death-bed Repentance; Men seem to give their Estates to God and the Poor, just as they part with their Sins, when they can keep them no longer; this is much such a Charity as it is Devotion, to bequeath our dead Bodies to the Church or Chancel, which we would never visit while we lived.

He that will not do Good till he be enforced by the last Necessity, was long unwilling: It is one of the worst Compliments we can put upon God, to give a thing to him when we can keep it no longer; as those do who give nothing to the Poor, but when they die: It is well that God has made all Men mortal, otherwise those Men would never do Good at all.

When all is done, nothing argues a great and generous Mind but only Goodness, which is a Propension and Disposition to make others happy, and a Readiness to do them all the good Offices we can: He is truly great, that is great in Charity, and little in himself.

It

If we know any better Employment than to do Good, any Work that will give true Pleaſure to our Minds, that hath greater and better Promiſes made to it, that we ſhall reflect upon with more Comfort when we come to die, and that, through the Merits and Mercies of our bleſſed Saviour, will ſtand us in more ſtead at the Day of Judgment, let us mind that Work; but if we do not, let us apply ourſelves to this Buſineſs of Charity with all our Might, and let us not be weary in well-doing, becauſe *in due Seaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not.*

When Juſtice and Charity call us at the ſame time, and we cannot ſatisfy them both, Juſtice ought to be preferred.

There is no other Way (if one may ſo ſpeak) of obliging God, but by doing Good to Men for God's Sake.

CHAP. LXXVI.

Concerning Education.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a Father or Mother, to ſuffer a Child to ſtarve for want of the Neceſſaries of Life, Food, and Raiment, and all the World would cry Shame upon them for it; but how much greater Cruelty muſt it in Reaſon be thought, to let an immortal Soul, and one for whom Chriſt died, periſh for want of Knowledge, and neceſſary Inſtruction for the attaining of eternal Salvation?

If

If we have taken no Care to instruct our Children in their Duty to God, it is no wise probable, that they will make Conscience of their Duty to us.

In the first Place, we must inform them that there is such a Being as God, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all Things; and then, that it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; that he continually preserves us, and gives us all the good Things that we enjoy; and therefore we ought to ask every thing of him by Prayer, because this is an Acknowledgment of our Dependence upon him; and to return Thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easy Tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberless Favours and Benefits: After this, they ought to be instructed more particularly in their Duty to God and Men; they are to be carefully informed, that there is a Life after Death, wherein Men shall receive from God Almighty an eternal Reward, or a terrible and endless Punishment, according as they have done or neglected their Duty in this Life: And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great Degeneracy and Corruption of human Nature, derived to us by the Fall and wilful Transgression of our first Parents, and of the Way of our Recovery out of this miserable State by Jesus Christ: We are more especially to endeavour, with the greatest Care and Prudence, to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Virtue, to train them up to the Exercise of Obedience and Modesty, Diligence and Sincerity, Tenderness and Pity, to the good Government of their Passions and their Tongue; particularly to speak Truth, and hate Lying as a base

baſe and vile Quality; to Piety and Devotion towards God, to Sobriety and Chaſtity with regard to themſelves, and to Juſtice and Charity towards all Men: We muſt endeavour, as well as we can, to diſcover the particular Temper and Diſpoſition of Children, as the Husbandman is wont to inquire,

—Quid quæque ferat Regio, quid quæque recuſet:
Hic ſegetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ.

Not that it can be expected that all Parents ſhould be Philoſophers, but that they ſhould uſe the beſt Wiſdom they have, in a Matter of ſo great Concernment.

In ſome Children the Seeds that are ſown fall into a greater Depth of Earth, and therefore are of a ſlow Diſcloſure; and yet they may afterwards be very conſiderable. Children are narrow-mouth'd Veſſels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

There is nothing good to be expected from a Child who is not tractable and reſpectful; if we let him in his Childhood be independent, and have his own Will, he will be ſo much more when he comes to be older; we muſt however take Care, when we oppoſe his Will, to do it gently, and after ſuch a Manner, that he may know that it is for good Reaſons, and for his Good we reſiſt him, and not out of Paſſion and Spite.

We do with Children what we pleaſe, when we win them by Gentleneſs, and get their Love; they are uſed betimes to do their Duty out of Inclination, and out of noble and generous Principles; however, Severity is ſometimes neceſſary.

It is to deal with Children as we do with Beasts, when we beat them every time they commit any Fault; there are other Ways to punish and to humble them; the most wholesome Chastisements are those which make them sorrowful, and ashamed of their Fault.

Like the Spring of an Engine, which being forcibly pressed, does, upon the first Liberty, return back with so much the greater Violence; so the vicious Dispositions of Children, when restrained merely by the great Severity of Parents, do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose, and from under their Discipline.

It might very well be contrived, that Childrens Recreations might sometimes consist of such ingenious Exercises, that they may at once both play and learn.

Tho' the Notions and Actions of little Children are very confused, it is nevertheless in Childhood, that Passions begin, and Habits arise; at the Age of three or four Years Children shew, in some Manner, what they will be all their Life-time; and we may then judge what their strongest Inclinations will be.

Children would be much better brought up with relation to Sciences, and good Manners, if Parents did not make so much Haste; if they did not put them so much forward in Learning, till their Understanding is somewhat formed; and chiefly, if they took Care to strengthen them in a Sense of Religion and Virtue, before they send them Abroad.

Religion being grounded upon History, and upon Matters of Fact, it would be convenient to begin the Instruction of Children, by the historical Part of Religion, and by the chief Matters of

of Fact related in the Old and New Testament; and it is what Children hearken to with the greatest Delight, and what they remember best.

If in our Instructions we insist only upon essential Doctrines and Duties, Children, without much Difficulty, will understand what will be said to them; especially, if we do it in plain Words, and popular Expressions, apt to produce clear and distinct Notions in the Minds of those we teach.

Commonly, when we exhort Children to Piety, instead of doing it with Gentleness, to make the Path of Virtue, pleasing to them, we speak to them roughly, and mostly in a chiding way; hence it comes, that they perceiving nothing pleasant in Religion, loath it; and all their Life-time they keep an Aversion, or at least an Indifferency, for Piety.

'Tis not enough to tell Children that they must pray to God, or go to Church, and to teach them some Forms of Prayers; but they must likewise carefully be warn'd, that the true Worship is inward and spiritual.

Children are proud to do what Persons grown do; therefore, if they were not allowed to pray before a certain time, they would look upon praying as a special Privilege; but when they are made to pray, in an Age uncapable of Attention, they come by that to think that Praying is nothing but rehearsing Prayers; besides, when we begin to teach Children to pray, we must use short and plain Prayers, containing nothing above their Reach.

Have a care of leaving your Children no other Business but to spend what you have left them, lest you put them in the ready Way to be undone.

It is certainly the Duty of every Ruler to endeavour to advance Piety and Godliness among all those that are under his Charge; and that as well in the lesser Dominion of a Family, as in the greater of a Realm, or Nation.

When Masters are presently on fire for any little Negligence or Fault of a Servant towards themselves, and yet can, without Trouble, see them run into the greatest Sins against God, 'tis a Sign they consider their own Concernments too much, and God's Glory, and their Servants Souls, too little.

CHAP. LXXVII.

Of Consideration.

Consideration must be frequent to keep eternal Objects present and powerful upon us; such is the natural Levity and Inconstancy, Sloth and Carnality of the Mind, that the Notions of heavenly Things quickly pass thro', but of earthly abide there.

It becomes a Man often to consider the End of his Being, that the Course of his Life may have a direct Tendency to it: Was he created and endued with rational and noble Powers of Soul, to raise an Estate, to shine in Pomp, to enjoy sensual Pleasures for a little while, and after the fatal Term, to be no more for ever? Was he sent into the World upon as mean a Business as that of the foolish Emperor, who

who employed an Army, furniſhed with all military Preparations, to gather Shells upon the Sea-ſhore?

How rare and diſuſed a Duty is that of Conſideration? How hardly are Men induced to ſet about it? Buſineſs and Pleaſure are powerful Diverſions; ſome pretend Buſineſs as a juſt Cauſe, but in vain; for the one Thing neceſſary challengeth our principal Thoughts and Care; beſides, there are Intervals of Leiſure, and the Thoughts are always ſtreaming, and often run waſte, which directed aright, would be very fruitful to the Soul; the true Cauſe of this Neglect is from the inward Temper of Men.

He that will not conſider becauſe he will ſin, and afterwards extenuate his Sin by his Inconſideration, urges one Sin in Excuſe for another, and makes that which is his Fault, his Apology.

In the managing this Duty of Conſideration, 'tis our Wiſdom not to be curious and inquiſitive after ſubtile Conceptions, and exalted Notions of the future State, that little confer to the making the Heart better; but to think ſeriouſly on what is plain and evident, and moſt uſeful to produce a preſent laſting Change.

F I N I S.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

FINIS.